

The impact of social media on customer's brand awareness

Case study: Hanoi Daewoo Hotel

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Brand awareness is crucial in the hotel industry as it is in any industry or business. Social media is one of the most significant phenomena of the 21st century that it is unavoidably one of the many marketing tools used by almost every famous brand or company world-wide. When combining social media in the hotel industry in building and raising brand awareness, there are sufficient results to be seen.</p> <p>This research is pursued with the intention of inquiring into the impact of social media on customer's brand awareness, through the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. In the process of exploring this topic, the author examined the how social media is utilized by the case company, what different social media platforms and channels are used as well as the methods used for these channels, and finally the impact of the social media dimensions and social media marketing on building and raising brand awareness for customers.</p> <p>The nature of the research is exploratory, therefore, the implementation method used in this research is qualitative. This approach entails working and collecting non-numerical data from a specific target group, analyzing and interpreting this collected data to understand the research topic through the study of the target group. Since this is an exploratory research on the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the qualitative data analysis method chosen is thematic analysis.</p> <p>Five themes emerged from the data analysis: consistency and cohesiveness, adjusting to current trends, storytelling, personalization, and feedback. The findings show that social media has positive impact on brand awareness, though still posing some challenges. However, there is not enough emphasis on social media in the hotel industry, at least for the case study, as a tool for raising brand awareness. There is still more focus on other methods of online marketing and traditional marketing. Therefore, more research needs to be done in order to collect more accurate results of the effectiveness of using social media on enhancing brand awareness.</p>		
Keywords/tags brand, branding, brand image, brand awareness, social media, social media marketing		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council report in 2014, the hospitality industry is the one of the fastest-growing global industries in the world, with a 4.3 percent growth rate per year, versus 3.0 percent of the total global economy and contributing US\$7 billion annually to total global domestic gross product. (World Travel and Tourism Council 2014)

The hospitality industry comprises of three major market segments: food and beverage, travel and tourism and accommodations. (Novak 2017) The hotel sector is one of the major sectors of the hospitality industry. Its primary purpose is providing paid lodging (hotels, motels, hostels, etc.) which vary in function, size and cost, for travelers on a short-term basis. Not only accommodation, there is also food, refreshments and other services provided to further enhance their stay at such places. In the hotel industry, service is at the core, which means the assistance provided by the hotel staff to facilitate the experience of the customers and increase purchase decisions. (Global Hospitality Portal N.d)

When met with the decision to purchase in a product category, the customer is able to discern a brand or single out that brand in the mind almost instantaneously, this means that the customer has a level of brand awareness. (Aaker 1991) Having brand awareness also means the consumer is able to link the product logo, image, color, packaging to the brand name. (Keller 2003)

Brand awareness is paramount for the hotel industry as customers have a stronger association with famous brand names that are more familiar to them, and therefore are more likely to choose those brands over the others. Every brand has their own unique selling point, knows what they stand for and is distinguishable from others. Therefore, it is of absolute pivot for a business to create a memorable and unique brand that will facilitate the process of raising brand awareness and secure a long-term position in the market (Durden 2019).

Cox (2012) affirmed that the computer technological evolution has undeniably and fundamentally transformed the way brand awareness is built and raised by organizations. The introduction of the internet, especially social media, has greatly influenced how hotel chains raise brand awareness for customers. Social media can be understood as electronic communication platforms on which users can create, share information, ideas, their own content, in forms of texts, images and videos. It is part of a bigger system known as the World Wide Web (Marriam-Webster 2004).

The proliferation of mobile devices and the World Wide Web means that it is increasingly easier for businesses to reach out to consumers to raise brand awareness and plays a huge role in building their perception of a particular brand.

1.2 Motivation for research

The motivation for doing research on this topic is threefold. As the author comes from Hanoi, Vietnam, one of motivating factors is the compulsion of the Vietnamese hospitality industry. The second factor is the author's interest in the case company Hanoi Daewoo Hotel and the third factor is the author's personal aspirations.

First of all, Vietnam's tourism and hospitality industry play a key role in the national economic development. The sector is projected to contribute 9 to 10% of the total GDP by 2020. (Vietnamnet 2016) The country is becoming an increasingly popular destination for tourists all around the world. Hence, the hotel sector has expanded and been emphasized greatly across the country. Hanoi, the capital city is a growing tourist attraction for domestic and foreign travelers. According to the Mastercard Global Destinations Cities Index (2016), Vietnam's two largest cities of Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi have been ranked in the top 20 fastest-growing destination for international visitors, with at least 1 million visitors staying overnight.

Vietnam is considered one of ASEAN's most promising and attractive markets for foreign investors, especially in the Vietnamese hospitality industry. (Pham 2017) The country is one of the most attractive destinations in Southeast Asia with over 10 million overseas visitors to the country as of 2016., it is understandable that Vietnam appeals to a diversity of travelers worldwide, given its beautiful landscape and coastal lines, richness in culture, history and cuisine.

There are increasingly more and more investors in the hospitality industry as interest continues to rise. With rising interest, the demand for luxury four to five-star hotels remains higher than ever before. The government is keeping an important role by paying more attention and investing more in this sector by giving incentives to investors (Pham 2017).

In general, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City remain the two major metropolitan cities with the most international visits (4.4 million and 3 million in 2014 respectively). With incessant rise in need for luxury lodging experience, demand exceeds supply in terms of luxury hotel rooms (Pham 2017).

Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is one of the most popular five-star hotels in Hanoi. It is an independent hotel, established in 1996. Since opening, it has been a first-rate choice for both leisure and business travelers, important political figures such as Presidents and Prime Ministers including Bill Clinton, V. Putin and Hu Jin Tao. (Vietnam Travel Guide N.d)

Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is renowned for its privileged location, in the hub of Hanoi's business and diplomatic quarter, exceptional service, well-appointed rooms and convenient access to famous attractions and landmarks. (Hanoi Daewoo Hotel N.d)

As it has come to the researcher's attention, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is widely known to domestic as well as foreign tourists. This drives the author's interest in finding out how Hanoi Daewoo Hotel raises its brand awareness for customers with the use of social media, that sets the brand apart from its competitors such as Hilton Hanoi, JW Marriott or Intercontinental Hanoi, and exploring the impact of the social media used by Hanoi Daewoo Hotel on customer's brand awareness.

As for the author's personal motivation, social media is a phenomenon that is close to the hearts of her generation. For the longest time, the author has felt a strong connection and deep passion to this major aspect of the Internet, especially the impact of social media on how people perceive or come to know of a hotel. As the interest of the author in the field of hospitality increases, it has greatly occurred to her the extent to which social media has impacted consumer's way of thinking about

brands and hotel brands in particular. This method of digital brand promotion is significantly preferred over the traditional way of doing marketing and promoting a brand.

1.3 Research questions

The objective of this research is to explore the impact of the social media used by Hanoi Daewoo Hotel on customer's brand awareness. In the process of answering this question, the author will analyze how social media is utilized by Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the different social media platforms used as well as the impact of these platforms and methods used for building and raising brand awareness for customers.

The main research question is: What is the impact of social media on customer's brand awareness?

The sub question is: How do social media marketing activities and social media dimensions impact brand awareness?

1.4 Structure of thesis

In this paper, in order to deliver a well conducted research, the author has undertaken the following steps and structured the thesis as follows:

In the first chapter, the introduction comprises of the background, motivation for research, the research questions and the objectives.

The second chapter comprises of the literature review and the theoretical framework. First of all, in the literature review, the author will provide explanation of key concepts which are used to create a concrete conceptual foundation for the research as well as to ensure the reader's understanding of this thesis. The explanations of the following key concepts will be given: brand, branding, brand image, brand awareness, social media, social media marketing.

After the key concepts, the author will give the theoretical framework. The framework is going to be created by the author combining the model of As'ad & Alhadid (2014).

In chapter 3, the methodology, the chosen research methods are described. As this is an exploratory thesis, the author has chosen to carry out a qualitative research with an inductive approach. An inductive approach aims to generate new theories that emerge after a myriad of observations and analysis of the data collected. (Gabriel 2013)

The research context will be given. This is followed by data collection. After the data is collected, the author will provide the data analysis, and finally the verification of the results.

In the fourth chapter, the retrieved results from the interviews are presented. Secondly, the results of the conducted interviews will be analyzed and compared to the initial objective of the thesis.

In the final discussion chapter, the answers to the research questions will be presented with assessment in light of literature review, followed by practical and managerial implications. The limitations of the research will also be discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research are given in this final chapter.

2 Literature review

The explanations of the following key concepts will be given: brand, branding, brand image, brand awareness, social media and social media marketing.

2.1 Brand

As the main research question is concerned with the concept of “brand awareness”, it is important that an introduction and definition of “brand” be presented. Brand awareness cannot exist without the “brand”, therefore, the knowledge of the reader about the meaning of “brand” must be reinforced and clarified.

Brand is the image that consumers have in mind. (Aaker 1991) It is also the unique characteristics that have been developed all the time in order to differentiate actual products from the competitors. Brands identify and distinguish one company’s offerings to customers and other parties. A brand is more than a name, or a mark. (Farhana 2012)

De Chernatony and McDonald (1992) define a brand as a product, service, person or place elevated to bring relevant, unique added values to match the needs of consumers.

According to Pallister and Law (2009), a more recent and modern definition of a brand is that a brand identifies a certain product, manufacturer or distributor from that of others. Moreover, a strong brand is not only a brand that is identifiable but also provides unique added values that answers the needs of customers in the best way possible. A strong brand is one that is able to maintain its position and continues to provide added value in spite of competitors' doings. (De Chernatony & McDonald 1992)

A brand is any visual characteristic that makes the product of one dealer identifiable from that of another. (American Marketing Association N.d) An expansion of definition of "brand" given by American Marketing Association includes the idea that a brand can also be referred to a customer experience which consists of a number of images and ideas, which then often refer back to the brand logo, symbol, name, slogan, and so forth.

According to Hobkirk (2012), a brand is who you are, how people identify, recognize and remember you through your "visual identity, verbal dialogue and tone of actions." A brand represents a company's identity and is often seen as the most valuable asset. (Kenton 2018) A brand refers to how customers perceive your company in comparison with other brands. When designing a brand, the business must decide how they want it to be viewed in the market by consumers. A successful brand is one that portrays the message or feeling that the company is trying to get across, thus, resulting in brand awareness (Kenton 2018).

To Nicolas Ind (1997), a brand's definition surrounds and digs deep in its functional performance, which form the values of the product or service, but the same time, a brand can just be a feature of a plain idea of a product or service. He refers to a brand as something that is purchased by the customer and that it is unique and cannot be copied by a competitor. For example, Pepsi and Coca-Cola are almost identical. However, some people have a stronger connection towards Coca-Cola and some to Pepsi (Ind 1997 p. 3).

Related to competition, Aaker (1991) also pointed out that a brand would give a signal to the customer of the source of the product or service, which helps customers distinguish from that of the competitors who have possible attempts to create something identical.

To the consumer, a brand creates a shortcut for the decision-making process of the customer when they feel indecisive about the same product from different companies and different brands. (The Branding Journal N.d)

2.2 Branding

It is important to differentiate brand from branding. A brand is a merely marketing tool while branding is the process of building a brand. (Hobkirk 2012) In the process of exploring “brand awareness” in the research question, the next step after learning about “brand” is understanding how to build a brand.

“Branding is the act of creating a brand.” (Hobkirk 2012) Branding has become the core of any business nowadays, that everything that we come across hardly goes unbranded. (Kotler and Amstrong 2009)

According to Hobkirk (2012), the process of branding consists of the positioning of the product or service of the company in the market, designing of a brand strategy, establishing a name for the company, constructing the identity of your company or of the product, composing the message of the brand, and framing the standards for your brand.

Branding can be understood as the endowment of the products and services with the power of the brand that has been created and familiarized in the consumers’ market. (Kotler & Keller 2015)

The meaning behind a brand and branding is that the company has to design a strategy that helps consumers to quickly identify a product or service that clearly states what it is and what it is not, giving them a reason to choose this specific brand over the others. Essentially, the main goal is to create a brand that offers products or services that consistently deliver on its promises and what it stands for, in order to attract and retain customers.

Branding is about differentiation. Good branding is built upon the question of what purpose it serves for the community. When creating a brand, one should not only define its functional purpose, what it offers and what it does, but also express the brand's higher purpose. (Aaker 1991) This higher purpose refers to the emotional and social benefits entailed with choosing that brand. For example, the higher purpose of Coca Cola is to "deliver happiness", which is an emotional association that customers get when purchasing the brand, not just because of its functional purpose of "relieving thirst with a good taste". (Aaker 1991)

Branding means shaping the personality, the heart of soul of a brand. (Kerpen 2019) Branding is the process of shaping the image and idea of a company, product, service in the consumer's mind through the shaping of a brand and brand image. (The Branding Journal) Brand image can be defined as a set of associations linked to a specific brand that customers have in their memory. (Keller 1993)

Branding affects the employees and people working for the company of that brand. (The Branding Journal) If you do not have a liking and connection towards the brand, you probably will not work for it. This also goes for suppliers, investors, stakeholders, distributors, providers. On the other hand, if the brand resonates with you and your values, for example, you are more willing to be part of the team. Branding has a deeper meaning than simply fixing a name or an image to a business, or validating it with a stamp of the organization. (Kapferer 1997)

2.3 Brand image

When you are creating a brand (branding), eventually, your brand will be made known to the public. Evidently, when your brand has reached public awareness, people will start to think and form opinions of your brand. This is known as brand image.

Brand image is the perception of the customer about your brand or product. Brand image involves a bundle of associations to a specific brand. In other words, it is a set of beliefs held by the customer of a brand (Management Study Guide 2019).

According to Management Study Guide (2019), brand image is basically all of the information and associations the customer has formed in relation to a particular brand, which the customer has absorbed and encountered from all kinds of sources. From

these information and associations, customers form an overall image of a brand from their subjective feelings and emotions based on empirical observations and encounters with the brand.

The word “brand image” contains the word “image” but it means more than the tangibility of a logo or symbol that makes a product distinguishable from others. It is an accumulation of experiences and encounters customers have had with the brand from which certain connections are formed in relation to the brand. (Thimothy 2016)

Brand image creates impression and recognition. Brand image encompasses not only visual elements but also brand associations in the service delivery such as speed, reliability and quality. That is why businesses have to pay close attention to every little detail in every interaction with the customer as it all adds up to create a positive brand image in the customer’s perception. Therefore, brand image is closely linked to the relationship you have with the customers (Thimothy 2016).

Keller (1993) also has a similar view of brand image: Brand image is the projection of all the customer’s perceptions of the brand in the customer’s mind. According to Keller (1993), brand image is formulated by the combination of brand attributes, brand benefits and brand attitudes. Around the same time, Aaker (1991) defines brand image as a meaningfully organized set of connections formed by the subjective perception and understanding of the customer of a brand, originated from brand-related activities performed by the firm itself.

2.4 Brand awareness

Brand image is the perception of the customer of a brand or product. (Management Study Guide 2019) Evidently, the clearer and stronger the brand image of the customers is, the more likely they are to consider your brand when contemplating a purchase. This type of awareness is known as brand awareness.

The capability of the customer to distinguish and retrieve a brand representing a specific product classification from his or her memory is referred to as brand awareness. (Aaker 1991 p. 61) Later, Aaker revised that brand awareness is indicative of how strongly a brand is present in the consumer’s mind. (Aaker 2002) This means the ability to remember a brand or a brand’s name in its product group.

Others have slightly different views of brand awareness. According to Spacey (2017), brand awareness refers to the level of awareness of the customer about brand-associated factors, such as reputation, culture and value. Brand awareness encompasses all the information about the brand that when mentioning the brand, a customer can recall information, emotions, experience and overall impressions with the brand.

According to McDowell (2005 p.39), brand awareness was defined as “the ability of an audience member to identify properly a brand through recognition or recall”, while Keller (2001) saw brand awareness as the ability of the consumer to recall and recognize the brand under different circumstances as well as being able to link the brand name, logo, style, symbol and so on to certain associations in memory.

Brand awareness involves the association of a brand’s characteristics, such as brand name, logo, style, etc. with a category need. In brand awareness, there is unassisted brand awareness, also known as brand recall, and aided brand awareness, also referred to as brand recognition. (Keller 1993) There is one thing to note is that in some cases, the brand name may not be necessarily simply identifying features like logo or package are important. The aspired awareness goal depends on the situational circumstances in which the product or brand is bought.

Brand awareness plays an important role in consumer decision making. This is due to three main reasons. The first one is that it is crucial that the consumer can instantly recall the brand when they think about a category of product. There are higher chances that the brand will become part of the consideration set, which is a bundle of brands seriously considered by the consumer for purchasing, if brand awareness is enhanced (Keller 1993).

Secondly, brand awareness can influence how consumers consider other brands, even if there are no brand-associated factors. In low-level involvement, customers can make the purchasing decisions with minimum brand awareness, even if the consumer has not formed an attitude towards the brand. (Keller 1993) This means that even if there are no brand associations, if the consumer is able to recognize the brand among others even with little to no knowledge about it, they almost always make the decision to purchase that brand.

Finally, brand awareness affects the how consumers make purchasing decisions by forming and strengthening brand-associated factors in their brand image. (Keller 1993) Brand awareness should be built in a way that brand associations can be easily formed and how easily different types of information become attached to the brand. According to Keller (1993), brand awareness is part of brand knowledge along with brand image. Not only brands, but also customers can create brand awareness and bring reassurance to new customers. (Aaker 1991)

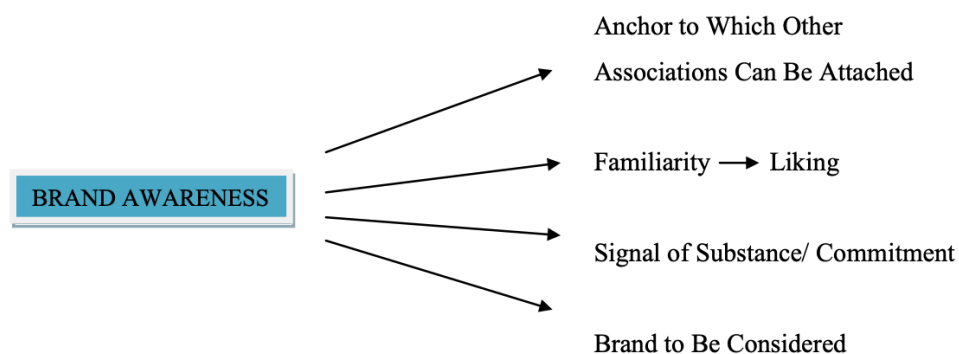


Figure 1. The value of brand awareness (Aaker 1991)

As can be seen from Figure 1, having brand awareness means the customer's ability to associate their existing brand knowledge with other brand-related factors is enhanced. It also acts a catalyst that turns familiarity to a brand to liking the brand. It is also signal that a particular brand has substance or shows sign of commitment to a brand. Lastly, it represents a brand to be taken into when customers make a purchase or think about making a purchase. (Aaker 1996)

According to Aaker (1991), brand awareness belongs to the introduction stage of the product life cycle. Brand awareness equals brand existence. In the beginning, the introduction stage, the main marketing actions to raise brand awareness are heavy advertising, PR for awareness, and sales promotion for trial.

According to Aaker (1991), in order to achieve brand awareness, both recall and recognition, a brand must accomplish two tasks: gaining a distinguishable image in the customer's mind and associating this image to a specific classification of product. Especially for a new brand, both tasks are equally important and required. However, in different contexts, a task is completed at a time. It really depends on the brand

and the context that it is in. For example, for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, which has already established a brand image for domestic customers, for foreign visitors, it is a bit more challenging since it is an individual hotel, unlike famous hotel chains in Hanoi such as Hilton or JW Marriott. A global brand can have significant advantages in gaining brand awareness, when customers travel from one country to another. (Aaker 1991)

Brand awareness provides value to customers by enhancing customer's interpretation of the brand, the information processing of customers when encounter brand-related signals. Having brand awareness means customers have more confidence in their purchase decision and is also a contributing factor to user satisfaction. (Aaker 1992 1996)

2.4.1 The dimensions of brand awareness

Brand awareness can be broken into brand recall – prior to the point of purchase and brand recognition – point of purchase. (Keller 1993)

Brand recall (unaided)

Brand recall involves “usual advertising”, which means brand association to a category, a need, message. Brand recall can be understood as a form of recall without any assistance of external factors, and can occur out of spontaneity. It refers to the ability of the consumer to correctly elicit the brand name from memory at the prompt of the product category. They might also can identify the needs fulfilled by the brand and other brand-related information (Keller 1993).

In other words, brand recall is the correct identification of brand given product category or some other type of probe as cue. The purpose of brand recall is to capture “top of mind” accessibility in consumer's memory. (Keller 1993)

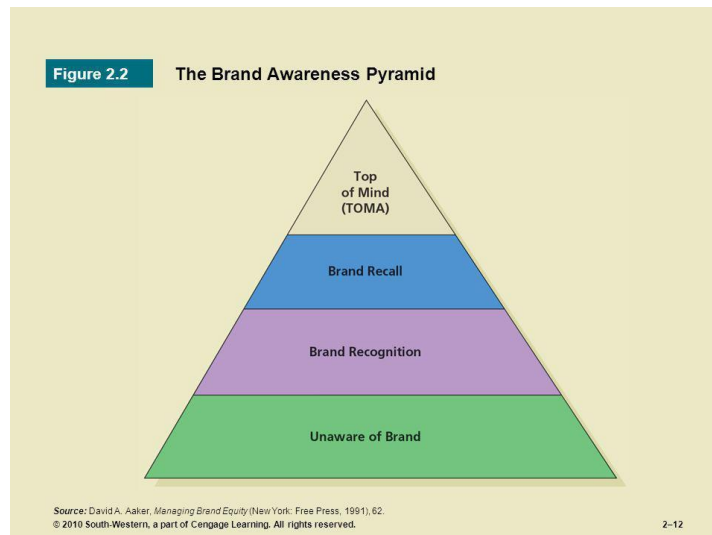


Figure 2. The Brand Awareness Pyramid (Aaker 1991)

As shown in Figure 2, the brand awareness pyramid of Aaker (1991), the bottom of the pyramid is “Unaware of the brand”. This is when the customer has no awareness of the brand in any way. The customer is not aware and does not have any knowledge of the brand or anything related to the brand, such as its logo, name, slogan, what it offers, etc. Top of the pyramid is “Top of Mind” (TOMA). Top of mind awareness occurs when someone mentions a product category, one immediately thinks of a specific brand in that product category. (Solarte 2006) A brand instantaneously pops up first on the mind of the consumer at the mention or thought of a product category. Then we say this brand is at the top of mind of the consumer.

In the middle, we have brand recognition and brand recall which are the two levels of brand awareness. (Keller 1993) Brand recall is a level higher than brand recognition. Brand recall is based upon asking a person to name the brand in a product category. It is referred to as “unaided recall” because, unlike in brand recognition, the customer is unassisted without any names provided. This makes brand recall more difficult than brand recognition. If a customer can recall a brand, and not just recognize it, this means the brand has a stronger position in the customer’s mind. (Aaker 1991 p. 62)

According to a finding by Aaker (1991 p. 66), brand recall possesses complexity, and that with the help of a subcategory and a strong position within that subcategory, this can help generate brand recall by bringing attention to the subcategory as well as creating notice for the brand.

There is a link between brand recall and purchasing decisions. Brand recall can play a crucial role in making decisions for everyday products such as detergent, coffee, washing powder, etc. for customers usually have made brand decisions prior to going to the store. (Aaker 1991 p. 67)

Brand recall can create the desirable and needed condition for consideration, while having subtle influence of the purchasing decision. It is also “the anchor to which other associations are linked.” (Aaker 1991 p.271)

Brand recognition (aided)

Brand recognition refers to the ability of the consumers to confirm their awareness of the brand at the cue of the brand prior to brand exposure. It also means consumers can correctly differentiate the brand with other brands. (Keller 1993)

However, this does not necessarily mean that they have to successfully identify the brand name. Rather, it means that consumers can recognize and differentiate the brand among others at the point of purchase or presented next to other brands, through the viewing of the packaging (Percy & Rossiter 1992).

Both brand recognition and brand recall are revealed as important based on how consumer makes decisions at the store. (Percy & Rossiter 1992) It is argued that brand recognition is slightly of more significance in the sense that consumers make the purchasing decision at the store, as they recognize the brand among other brands. (Keller 1993)

Brand recognition is more important for new and niche brands while brand recall is more significant for well-known established brands. (Aaker 1996) However, Aaker perceived brand recognition as the lower level of brand awareness, as demonstrated in his awareness pyramid (Figure 2).

This is also referred to as “aided recall”. This is when the customer is able to identify a brand or brands that they have heard of before, in a set of brand names in a product class. Therefore, there needs to be a link of the brand to the product class, albeit, it does not have to be strong, as there are probes as cues that facilitates recognition for the customer. This makes brand recognition the minimum level of brand awareness. Nevertheless, brand recognition is extremely effective at the point of purchase, at stores as it heavily influences customer’s purchasing decisions. (Aaker 1991 p.62)

Everyone prefers the things that they are able to recognize. Moreover, brand recognition is “a cue for presence, substance, and permanence” (Aaker 1991 p.271).

Brand recognition refers to the extent to which customers can identify your brand, product and service, from its visual symbols and products. (Spacey 2017) Brand recognition means the correct distinguishing of brand as having been previously seen or heard. The purpose of brand recognition is to capture retrievability or availability of brand in memory. (Keller 1993)

2.5 Social media

According to a recent study, the number of people using the Internet in 2018 is 4.021 billion, and by 2021, there is predicted to be 3.02 billion social media users. (Mosley 2019) Due to the explosion of the social media phenomenon in the last decade, many marketers have turned to social media to enhance brand awareness.



Figure 3. Sprout’s 2018 Social Index (Barnhart 2018)

Simultaneously, as shown in Figure 3, brand awareness emerges as top priority for social marketers as 80% of them places increasing brand awareness as their goal on social, according to Sprout’s 2018 Social Index. (Barnhart 2018)

Mothe (2012) defined social media as the networks of different online computer-aided social platforms on which exchange and circulation of information is fostered.

Social media is the collective of online communication channels that serve the purpose of disseminating community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. (IGI Global N.d) Social media allows business enterprises to advertise and promote their product to their existing customer base, reach out to prospective customers and foster new businesses. Social media is really important and very effective in the promotional mix to attract attention and raise interest in the customers in the early stage.

Social media can be defined as a variety of new sources of online information that are created, formulated and used by consumers intended on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues (Blackshaw & Nazzaro 2004).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) saw social media as one level higher as a collection of cyberspace applications built on the ideological rudiments of Web 2.0 which underlines user-generated content and end user experience optimization. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) share the same view on allowing online users to create their own content and exchange it freely in an online setting. Social media has unequivocally instigated considerable and omnipresent shifts between organizational, communal and individual communication. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

Social media allow online users to connect and interact through the creation of one's own profile, the ability to befriend others, to send direct messages among each other amidst many other functions. In marketing, social media not only enhances individuals' involvement with each other and with others, but also enables businesses to reach a specific group of people (Jayasuriya & Azam 2017).

Social media networks allow individuals to create and maintain social communication, create interaction, share information, write content, participate in social movements through the Internet. From the businesses' perspective, it gives brands the opportunity to interact and share information with the customers. (Jayasuriya & Azam 2017)

A survey by DiMauro and Bulmer (2014) found that more than two thirds of sampled individuals considered going through social media as part of their everyday practices.

Simultaneously, nearly 90% of customers' usage on the online social climate was concomitant to brands.

Social media facilitates conversation, in contrast to traditional media which generates content but does not allow the audience to produce or develop the content. (Ward 2016)

Social media is essentially a category of electronic media on the Internet where actions such as talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online, between people take place. (Jones 2009) It is a two-way communication channel, rather than a one-way broadcast like traditional marketing. The main idea of social media is that one can stay connected and linked to other sites, resources and people.

The aspects of openness, participation, conversation, community, and connectedness belong to the perception of Vice President of global digital marketing company iCrossing - Mayfield (2008) of social media. From a company's perspective, social media is an important tool to interact and communicate with customers. However, companies only have very limited control over social media communication.

2.5.1 Characteristics of social media

To Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010), social media is the new media. This new media possesses the following six characteristics: digital, pro-active, visible, both real-time and memory, ubiquitous, and networks. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010) Other authors have relatively similar views. According As'ad & Alhadid (2014), there are five dimensions to social media:

Online communities

Online communities are groups of people that share similar interests and goals use the Internet tools to communicate, interact, share information and develop their interests over time. (Owyang 2007) Examples of online communities are forums, Facebook groups and pages, or Instagram accounts created by the online users dedicated to a specific brand they are interested in. Other users can find and join the group if they wish. On this common space, anyone can share their opinions and brand-related information. A company should build a community around their product or service

on the online platforms and social media and have as many people talking as possible. (Taprial & Kanwar 2012) As Mayfield (2008) mentioned community is one of the five characteristics of social media. Social media allows people to come together on the basis of common interests, goals, hobbies, and so on. These people form their own communities online on which they can share information and develop their common interest over time.

Sharing of content

Sharing of content means the level of exchange, sharing, accepting, spreading information of individuals on online platforms. (Babac 2011) The sharing of content dimension also places great emphasis on the content itself. All shared content has the potential of being shared further by others at an exponential rate. The shared content almost always depends on and is fueled by user conversations. With any content, video, photo, post, or link shared by a brand, organization, website, it can generate good or bad word-of-mouth from the customers. That is why businesses need to remember that with any shared content, they are communicating their brand's value, they are making a statement, creating and adding up to the brand image which can potentially leave a long-lasting impression on the customer's mind. (Kietzmann et al. 2011) The sharing of content comes in both ways as brands share their own content and users can share it however they want. This is a two-way communication, where there is constant flow of interacting and sharing of different content. Mayfield (2008) also pointed out that social media is a two-way conversation that stimulates interaction between brands and customers and customer to customer, unlike traditional media such as TV or radio where content is generated and transmitted one-way to an audience.

Interaction

An example of online interaction can be that a Facebook page or Twitter account can make notifications to inform all the followers of a certain subject quickly and simultaneously. (Berselli, Burger & Close 2012) Customers have the option of turning on post notifications of their favorite brand so that they will be notified on their mobile devices whenever there is a new post or update. By updating users with the latest current information, social media facilitates greater interaction within online com-

munities. (Fischer & Reuber 2011) Online communities function on the voluntary participation of online users. Mayfield (2008) mentioned that participation of online users is one the main features of social media. It truly blurs the line and bridges geographical and virtual gaps between brands and their customers. Any audience is encouraged to participate in the conversations, for example, on Facebook fan pages. Everyone shares their opinion, information, personal experience, brands helping customers out in the comments as much as users help each other, as online communities.

Accessibility

Social media is easily accessible to individuals who have Internet connection at homes and in their offices. It also takes minimum effort, knowledge and almost no costs for usage. (Taprial & Kanwar 2012) Anyone from all over the world can have access to social media as long as they have Internet connection. Involvement in the community of this day and age entails a certain level of activity of individuals on social media. Therefore, the technical people working on and ensuring the operation of social media platforms make sure that everyone can navigate them, even those with hearing, sight or mobility impairments, with specific added features that assist these individuals. For instance, Facebook launched an automated alternative text in iOS app for English-speaking users, which allows the detection of the weather, number of people in a photo and their facial expressions. (The Information Access Group N.d) Mayfield (2008) mentioned of the key characteristics of social media is its connectedness. Social media prides itself on its connectivity with other websites, resources and people by making use of links. That is how users can get easy and quick to an abundance of information on brands that they are interested in, and also have instant connection with them.

Credibility

Social media should be as transparent as possible in providing information establishing trust with the online communities. It is important for businesses to reach out to their target audience, listen to what they have to say in order to understand and deliver on their needs. (Taprial & Kanwar 2012)

Credibility also means the credibility of the users. As more people rely on social media as a key information-seeking source, misinformation and disinformation is becoming more rampant than ever. To avoid these types of content, online users have to be able to discern which a piece of information is credible and which is not (Abbasi & Liu 2013). Similarly, Mayfield (2008) mentioned openness as one the main features of social media. On social media, brands and users are open to feedback, comments, and participation from all users. Being open also means fostering and stimulating sharing of information and voting. Users can freely create their own content which is almost always accessible to everyone.

2.5.2 The zones of social media

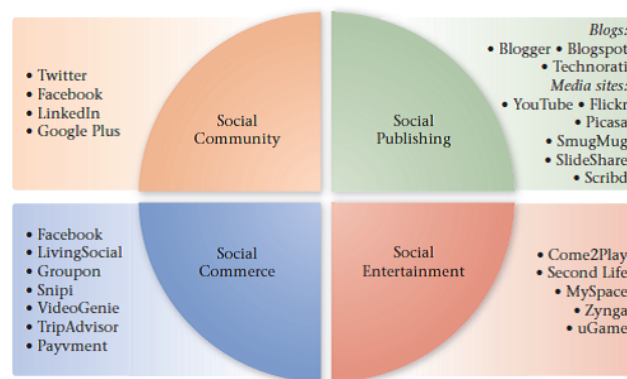


Figure 4. The Zones of Social Media (Tuten & Solomon 2018)

As shown in Figure 4, looking at the most up-to-date version of the zones of social media by Tuten and Solomon (2018), there are four zones to social media: social community, social publishing, social commerce and social entertainment.

The social media channels that focus on building the relationships and common activities that users take part in with those sharing the same interest or identification are known as social communities. The main activities of social communities include sharing, socializing, conversing. The main channels include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus, and online forums (Tuten and Solomon 2018).

Social publishing is the “production and issuance of content for distribution via social publishing sites” such as blogs, media-sharing sites, social network sites, social book-markings and social news sites. Main activities include editorial, commercial and user-generated. Social publishers include typical people, professionals, organizations,

brands, and media companies. Types of content of social publishing include blogs, articles, infographics, videos, podcasts, and case studies (Tuten & Solomon 2018).

Social commerce refers to the use of social media to assist customers' online activities of shopping, selling, buying of products and services. Marketing activities of this zone include CRM/service, retailing/sales, and human resources. The main vehicles include Facebook, LivingSocial, Groupon and TripAdvisor. Social entertainment encompasses channels and vehicles that offer customers the opportunities to play and entertain themselves, such as Come2Play, MySpace and uGame (Tuten and Solomon 2018).

2.5.3 Types of content on social media

Marketer-generated content

It is important to distinguish the different types of content on social media. There are two main types of social media content: marketer-generated content and user-generated content, both of which are crucial for brand awareness. (Jelyta 2015)

Marketer-generated content is usually implemented in forms of brand posts that marketers generate on company-owned websites or their social media channels, such as Facebook page, in order to inform and update their customers as well as other online users of the developments and offers regarding the brand. (Jelyta 2015)

According to Jelyta (2015), marketer-generated content is more advantageous to customers who are already avid followers of the brand. Business-owned websites, corporate blogs are the most common places where marketer-generated content is found, as well as social networking sites.

Nearly 90% of brands market their products or services using social media. (ElAydi 2018) Marketers can make use of the different free tools available on different social networking sites. One of the most common ones used nowadays are fan pages, for examples, Facebook fan pages. Fan pages are becoming the hub where consumers and fans of a brand communicate with the brand itself and people sharing the same interest. For brands, this is one of the most effective to build connections and interactions with consumers due to low costs and high reach. Therefore, brands and marketers are creating more content to engage with customers online through fan

pages. Users follow brands that they are interested in, hence, they are more likely to respond to and engage in the content created by that brand on the different social networking sites on which the brand is active. (Martínez-Navarro & Bigné 2017)

User-generated content

User-generated content can also be referred to as electronic word-of-mouth. (Bahtar & Muda 2015) User-generated content is similar to traditional word of mouth except that the information is disseminated through an online medium.

User-generated content can be defined as any type of own material created and uploaded onto the Internet by non-media and poses significant influence over consumer's purchase and consumption. (Bahtar & Muda 2015)

According to Krumm, Davies & Narayanaswami (2008), user-generated content is the content that comes from regular ordinary individuals who contribute information voluntarily onto the Web, for education or entertainment purposes, that is visible for everyone to see. Restaurant ratings, wikis, are examples of user-generated content.

In the words of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), user-generated content is created "outside professional routines and practices". The content can be produced, modified, shared and consumed individually or collectively. It can be seen as the comprehensive sum up of all the methods and techniques employed by the users to tailor social media to their personal use. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010 p.61)

Community content from consumers has proven to have a bigger impact on consumer purchase behavior, compared to marker-generated content. (Goh, Heng & Lin 2013) They have found that activities carried out by the online communities and their engagement on social media in general lead to more positive purchase decisions.

2.6 Social media marketing

Social media is simply a tool while social media marketing refers to one of the ways one utilizes this tool. (Cormier 2013)

When marketers turn to social media to enhance brand awareness, the act of using the social media platforms for this purpose as well as other marketing purposes,

from increasing sales to driving traffic website, is known as social media marketing. (Buffer N.d)

Social media marketing is a new trend that is growing rapidly that enables businesses to reach out to customers easily and quickly. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013) Social media marketing can be simply defined as the use of social media to promote a product or service. This kind of marketing can be considered as one of the subsets of online marketing activities that complete the traditional Web-based strategies of promotion which include e-newsletters and online advertising campaigns (Barefoot & Szabo 2010).

The adoption of various social media technologies, methods and software for the formulation, communication, delivery and interchange of offerings that exhibit value and benefits for the stakeholders of an enterprise is referred to as social media marketing. (Tuten & Solomon 2018)

Social media marketing refers to techniques that target social networks and applications to spread brand awareness or promote specific products or services. (Techopedia 2016) Social media marketing involves the utilization of different social media sites to raise visibility on the internet and for the promotion of products and services. (Innovatiopei N.d)

Social media marketing can be defined as the process that facilitates the promotion of websites, products and services via online platforms. It involves marketing-related activities such as blogging, sharing photos, videos and posts online. These activities are done via online tools, platforms, applications that enable customers and brands to connect, interact and communicate with each other (Jayasuriya & Azam 2017).

One of social media marketing's primary aims is to drive traffic to the official website of a brand, simultaneously stimulating brand awareness for online consumers. (Erstad 2018) This is done through the use of various different social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube. The interaction between brands and customers on social media plays a crucial role in shaping the perception of the consumers of the brand. Therefore, marketers always pay close attention to how their message is designed and would come across to online audience as well as how it is most likely

going to be interpreted because it can turn out to be a “massive success” or a “total disaster” (Erstad 2018).

The prevalent perception of social media marketing is that it is a type of advertising aimed at targeted audience, hence, more suitable and effective for raising brand awareness. Campaigns spread through social media are suggested to have more resonance with consumers as they are usually discovered through trusted links and sources shared by others on one’s social network. With the help of the astronomical database on social media, advertisers are able select distinct audience to send customized messages to, promising to reap more desirable results (Techopedia 2016). By encouraging users to spread messages to personal contacts, social media has introduced a new era of exponential dissemination and a new trust to mass communication and mass marketing. (Hafele 2011)

2.6.1 Overview of major social media channels and their effects on the hotel industry

The author has chosen to talk about these five major social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and TripAdvisor. Firstly, these five platforms are ranked among the top ten most popular and most used social media platforms in the world, with Facebook and YouTube being the most and second popular. (Ahmad 2019) Another reason is that each of these four platforms represent a different type of social media with its own distinct unique feature, architecture, culture and norms. Users on each platform visit these websites with slightly different intentions with diverse ways of interaction (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian 2012).

Most importantly, this choice is justified by the fact that these are the main social media platforms on which Hanoi Daewoo Hotel are active and operating. Therefore, the author can explore deeper how the hotel utilizes these platforms to and how that impacts its brand awareness.

Facebook

Facebook, a social media interactive platform launched in 2004, with more than 2.38 billion monthly active users as of March 31, 2019, and 1.56 billion daily active users

on average as of March 2019 (Facebook Newsroom N.d), remains the world's biggest and most popular social network.

Facebook is a social networking combination of written content, online communities, multimedia exchange, smart applications, and digital dialogue among individuals (Sullivan 2013)

In the hotel industry, Facebook creates the opportunity for hotels and hotel brands to connect to millions of potential customers. Through interaction with the hotel on social media, the brand exposure expands to their network of people, and so on and so forth. Thereby, the brand gains more brand exposure and brand awareness through social media.

Twitter

Twitter is another social media platform that encourages user interaction, sharing and communication. There are about 300 million active twitter accounts worldwide with about 500 million tweets per day. Roughly 20% of the tweets are product or brand-related. On Twitter, there are about 100 million brand or company-related messages per day (Cooper 2019).

Twitter focuses on quick interaction with audience in 140 characters or less, which is its main advantageous feature. It is one of the leading social media platforms for B2B and B2C worldwide as of 2018. The best objective for brands to use Twitter is for public relations (Cooper 2019).

In the hospitality industry, Twitter acts as a direct channel to customers and leads for brands to interact and potentially build relationships with. Twitter is also used by many brands to deal with customer service issues. A Twitter account when used properly is a great tool for customer's feedback, when open relationships with guests are built that facilitate flow of conversation open to the public. It also reinforces assurance in the customers through seeing the way staff handles and answers to different situations, which is the customer care approach that hotels mostly use Twitter for (Powers 2009).

Instagram

Instagram is a mobile photo-and-video-sharing social networking service launched in 2010. It has 700 million monthly active users, on which over 95 million photos and videos are shared every day. (Dogtiev 2018) Instagram is great for growing brand awareness and introducing products. Moreover, Instagram offers business a friendly and authentic way to promote the brand and product without selling directly to customers.

In the hotel industry, Instagram is best used for building relationships and conversations. It is also good for keeping up with activities of customers. It is good for B2C, as brands can follow customers and vice versa. Interaction also seems more personal as brands can personally comment on posts of customers and vice versa. The main objective of this social media channel is lead generation (Tuten & Solomon 2018). Market data can also be gathered by brands through feedback on Twitter. This information can be made use of to generate smart digital strategies essential for brand awareness and business growth. (Tang, Zhulei, Smith & Montgomery 2012)

YouTube

Founded in 2005, YouTube is arguably the biggest online video platform worldwide. It thrives on user-generated video content, including music videos, video blogs, TV clips, educational videos, etc. (Statista 2019) YouTube has the second largest user population, over one billion monthly active users – behind Facebook. Users can view, share, upload videos and have access to video content all over the world. (Wanjohi 2017)

Online users use YouTube with the intent of viewing different types of video content, creating own profiled channels, subscribing to specific brands or individuals whose content they demonstrate interests in. (Weber 2014) It is the second largest search engine. It makes up for 28 percent of all Google search results. Over 90 percent of Internet traffic is video content, and video promotion is six times more effective than print and direct mail.

As a marketing tool, YouTube engages audience with video content, that are easily accessible and shareable. Everyone loves videos. Social videos generate 1200% more shares than text and messages combined. (Sukhraj 2019)

In the hotel industry, video displays the hotel in a way pictures and photos cannot. (Sullivan 2013) A hotel's YouTube channel can feature videos of managers, employees, customers, interacting, sharing experiences and opinions, which create a deeper and more personal connection with the audience.

TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is the world's biggest travel platform. The platform now has 490 million users worldwide, offering reviews and opinions to help travelers plan and have the best trip (TripAdvisor 2019).

TripAdvisor owns and operates a portfolio of 8.3 million online travel brands, including different types of accommodation, restaurants, experiences, airlines and cruises, with more than 760 million reviews and opinions from authentic users (TripAdvisor 2019).

TripAdvisor provides users with the ability to compare real-time pricing and availability of different services and experiences. (Reuters 2019) The platform operates in 49 markets and is available in 28 languages. (TripAdvisor 2019)

TripAdvisor has significant impact on hotels and the tourism industry in general. The reviews on TripAdvisor are considered important when booking and planning trips and hotels by 96% of TripAdvisor users. (ReviewPro 2015)

Reviews play a considerable influence on customer's purchase decision. For instance, the customer will read at least 6 TripAdvisor reviews before making the decision to book a hotel. Responses to reviews is also one of the ways the platform has a massive impact on hotels. One of the studies carried out by TripAdvisor found out that 80% of its users feel recognized and appreciated when hotels respond to their reviews (ReviewPro 2015).

2.7 Theoretical framework

To answer the main research question: "What is the impact of social media on customer's brand awareness?" and the sub-question: "How do social media marketing activities and social media dimensions impact brand awareness?", the author com-

bined the framework of As'ad & Alhadid (2014) featuring the key dimensions of social media, with social media marketing featuring types of social media content (marketer-generated content and user-generated content) through the zones of social media (social communities, social commerce and social publishing) to investigate how social media impacts customer's brand awareness.

The author has chosen the model of As'ad & Alhadid (2014) as it corresponds with the aim of this research which is to explore the relationship between social media and brand awareness. The model of As'ad & Alhadid (2014) studies social media and brand equity which encompasses brand awareness. The author combined the five social media dimensions of As'ad & Alhadid (2014) with her created framework of social marketing, to explore the impact of social media on brand awareness.

Study Model:

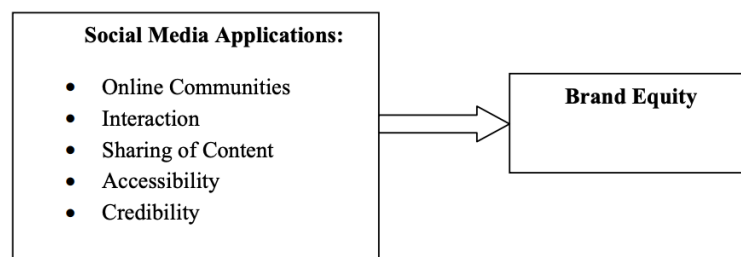


Figure (1) Research Model

Source: (Angella, & Eunju, 2012) (Kim,&Ko, 2010) (Babac, 2011)

Figure 5. Research Model (As'ad & Alhadid 2014)

As can be seen in Figure 5, the framework of As'ad & Alhadid (2014) is based on the model of Angella & Eunju (2012), Kim & Ko (2010) and Babac (2011). It studies the impact of the social media marketing with the five dimensions of online communities, interaction, sharing of content, accessibility and credibility, on brand equity of mobile service providers.

Brand awareness is one of the fundamental dimensions of brand equity. (Aaker 1996) Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as a bundle of resources and debts associated with a brand, that supplements or deducts the product's value to the business and/or its customers. According to the Customer-based Brand Equity framework of

Aaker (1992), brand equity comprises factors including the extent of customer's loyalty to the brand, the level of understanding coupled with the ability to recognize and recall the brand, customer's perception of the quality of the brand, being able to connect brand- associated factors and the resources of the brand.

Keller (1993) adopted a consumer-based approach to brand equity as he associates brand equity with "the differential effect that knowing a brand name has on the customer's response to the product or its marketing."

According to Feldwick (1996), brand equity is perceived as the aggregate value of the brand in the financial sense represented in a balance sheet. Brand equity is a means of measuring the extent to which the customer is attached to the brand, as well as an indication of the associations and beliefs customers have about a brand. In general, brand equity is everything related to the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand (Keller 1993).

The role of brand awareness in brand equity relies greatly on the context and on the level of awareness achieved. Brand awareness belongs to the introduction stage of the product life cycle, along with brand awareness and brand attitude. Brand awareness equals brand existence. Whereas brand loyalty is at the maturity stage of the product life cycle (Aaker 1991). In the beginning, the introduction stage, the main marketing actions to raise brand awareness are heavy advertising, press release, public relations for mass exposure and sales promotion for trials.

As brand awareness is part of brand equity, the author chose this framework to focus on the impact of these five dimensions on only the brand awareness aspect of brand equity. According to As'ad & Alhadid (2014), one of the primary factors of brand equity is brand awareness, in company with the customer's viewpoints towards the brand and their cognizance of brand ethics. The study was tested on a sample of 450 customers belonging to different suppliers of mobile service in Jordan. The results of the research reveal a salient correlation between the use of social media marketing and aspects of brand equity, in which the most significant impact was seen in the Accessibility and Credibility dimensions.

As discussed above, social media marketing consists of user-generated content and marketer-marketed content. These types of content can be found on different social media platforms that belong to different zones of social media. For instance, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, belong to the social community zone, Facebook can also be considered to be in the zone of social commerce as well as TripAdvisor, and YouTube and Blogger can be in the social publishing zone.

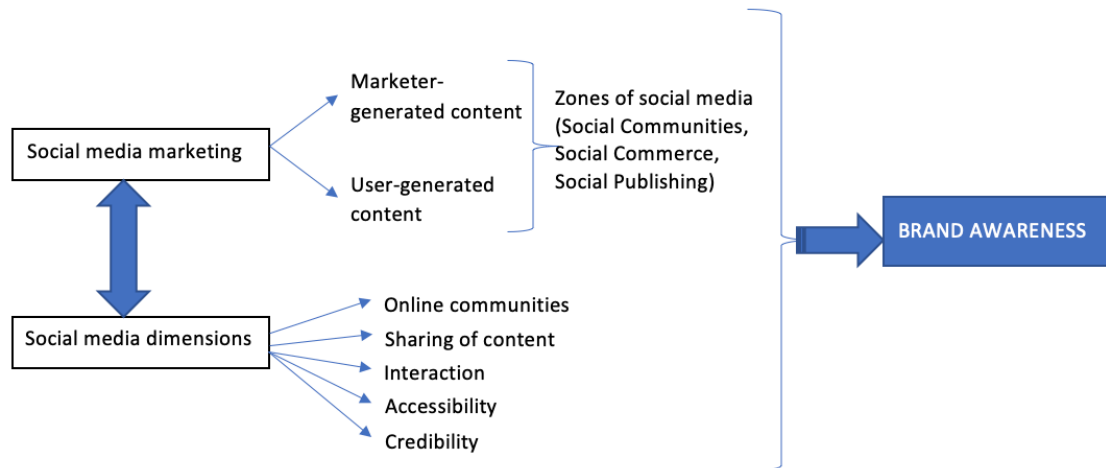


Figure 6. Social media & brand awareness - Theoretical Framework

Figure 6 presents the framework which was created by the author by combining the key aspects of social media dimensions (As'ad & Alhadid 2014) with the aspects of social media marketing, which are the types of content and how they are demonstrated on the different zones of social media, to further highlight the dimensions of social media. All these aspects work in conjunction with one another to build and enhance customer brand awareness.

Social media marketing and social media dimensions have direct correlations to brand awareness. The hotel industry is focusing on social media marketing more now than ever before. Especially for individual hotels, this is an effective tool to build brand image and raise brand awareness. Palmer and Lewis (2009) contended that there is a conspicuous link between the use of social media platforms for social media marketing and the formation of brand awareness. Social media is one of the most popular and effective methods of gaining brand awareness nowadays due to the exponential number of users worldwide. The types of content created by the users and marketers on social media all play a crucial role in helping highlight the five afore-

mentioned dimensions of social media. These types of content are dispersed on different zones of social media also known as social media platforms. Social media offers a plethora of online communication tools that help spread a brand on digital platforms in order to raise brand awareness. (Keller 2001) There is also a connection among the five dimensions of social media: the social media platforms are tools that create and facilitate interaction within online communities. The interaction can be further enhanced by sharing of content by brands and online users themselves. What motivates these online individuals to use social media is the accessibility of social media, through Internet connection. What makes the customers stick around and follow the brands on social media is the credibility that the businesses create through the content they share, the activities they do within and outside social media. All these dimensions of social media through the social media marketing activities work together to create a brand image of customers that can help increase brand awareness.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research approach

The exploratory nature of the research entails the qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is defined as “an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world.” This type of approach aims to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret a particular phenomenon, by looking into the meanings brought to them by different people (Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

Denzin & Lincoln (2005) sees qualitative research as a field of inquiry that crosscuts disciplines, facts, and subject of matters. It surrounds a complex interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions.

Qualitative research utilizes a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand the phenomena in context-specific settings. For example, in the real-world setting, the author does not attempt to manipulate the phenomena of interest but only try to uncover the truth. (Golafashani 2003)

Qualitative research involves the collection of empirical materials that describe and present the various aspects as well of routine and problematic moments of the lives of the group investigated. These materials can be interview, case study, life story, personal experience, visual texts, etc. (Bashir, Afzal & Azeem 2008)

Using this approach means working and collecting non-numerical data from a specific target group, analyzing and interpreting this collected data to understand social life through the study of such target group. This method of research allows the author to investigate the meaning of the actions that people convey through their behavior and interaction with others, and eventually reveal the underlying meaning of such actions (Crossman 2018).

Qualitative approach has the following claimed characteristics: soft, flexible, subjective, political, case study, speculative, holistic and grounded, which are in stark contrast with quantitative which was described as “hard, fixed, abstract, objective, rigorous and scientific. (Halfpenny 1979 p. 799)

To understand a social or human problem, qualitative researchers collect data from a natural setting, perform data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns of themes. The final written report consists of the participants’ input, the researcher’s reflexivity, an in-depth description and interpretation of the problem, and a call for action (Creswell 2007).

Qualitative research is used when a problem needs to be explored. (Creswell 2007) In this thesis, the author is exploring the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel to find out the effects of the social media used by said hotel on raising brand awareness for its customers.

The author’s study is cross sectional because it studies the case company at one point in time. (Bryman 2007) This means that the author discusses the case company at a specific point in time and does not collect data over a long period of time. This is the most suitable method for the author due to the scale and size of the case company and its social media platforms, as well as the author’s personal time constraints to carry out a study over a period of time.

3.2 Research context

First of all, Vietnam's tourism and hospitality industry play a key role in the national economic development. Vietnam is considered one of ASEAN's most promising and attractive markets for foreign investors, especially in the Vietnamese hospitality industry. (Pham 2017) Home to beautiful landscape and beaches, rich culture, history and unique cuisine, Vietnam is justifiably becoming a more and more compelling destination to a diversity of travelers worldwide.

Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City – the two biggest cities of Vietnam, were ranked top 20 fastest-growing and most popular destination for foreign visitors. (Mastercard Global Destinations Cities Index 2016)

The context of this research is Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, Apartment and Office Complex, is a luxury five-star hotel in Hanoi with charming interiors and breathtaking views of the city. Since its opening in 1966, the hotel has been a first-rate choice for both leisure and business travelers (Hanoi Daewoo Hotel website).

Hanoi Daewoo Hotel provides 411 rooms, equipped with full range facilities and exclusive services that ensure the most pleasant customer experience. There are many types of rooms that cater the needs and wants of different customers. The price ranges from 130 US dollars to 2880 US dollars for the Royal Suite (Hanoi Daewoo Hotel website).

Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is located right at the center of Hanoi, making it a strategic location among an area of business, trade and entertainment. The reviews for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel on TripAdvisor and other traveling sites have been positive. The average rating is four out of five stars. (TripAdvisor 2019)

3.3 Data collection

Data in qualitative studies can be collected through primary sources such as interviews and observation or secondary sources such as websites. (Bryman & Bell 2017) Since this is an exploratory research on the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the qualitative method chosen by the author is to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method where some questions are predetermined and asked to all candidates, while others arise spontaneously in a free-flowing conversation. The questions may vary from interview to interview, so as the order of questions asked. The research question and research objectives are explored via the development of additional questions. (Saunders 2009 p.320).

This means that there are that have been questions prepared by the author prior to the interviews and asked at the interviews. During the interviews, there were new questions developing and arising due to the flow of the conversation, follow-up questions ensued to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issue.

The author interviewed the General Manager Mr. Erwin Popov and the PR (Public Relations) Manager Ms. Le Anh Ngoc of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. The questions asked were related to brand awareness, social media and the relationship between the two concepts. The author has obtained a verbal consent to mention their names in this thesis and for further use of the material collected during the interviews. They have given permission for the open source publication of the full thesis.

The author used her phone to record the interviews. The data were then transcribed into a Word document and then organized by the author in terms of her research questions and concepts. All data collected from the interviews are presented as it was said in the interview with no transformations or distortion of the information.

Name	Position	Referred in this work as
Mr. Erwin Popov	General Manager of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel	Resp. 1
Ms. Le Anh Ngoc	PR Manager of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel	Resp. 2

Table 1. List of participants

3.4 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data collected, the study has adopted the thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews.

This analytical method is chosen by the author due to its suitability with the nature of qualitative exploratory research as it is highly inductive. As themes emerge from data collected from interviews, the author uses this method to gain insight and knowledge within the data gathered in order to develop a deeper understanding of the studied group or topic. (Komori N.d)

Thematic analysis is a data analysis method used to systematically identify, organize and offer insight into, patterns of meaning also referred to as “themes” across the data set. (Braun & Clarke 2012)

Thematic goes as far as analysing all aspects of the research topic. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In thematic analysis, what matters is that the theoretical framework and the methods used match what the author is researching and wants to find out about. The researcher also acknowledges these decisions and recognizes them as “decisions”. (Braun & Clarke 2006)

Thematic analysis is suitable especially for researchers who are at the early stages of a qualitative career, thematic analysis offers a more accessible method of analyzing data, as it can be used in different theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke 2006).

One of the advantages of thematic analysis is, according to Braun & Clarke (2006), is its flexibility. This means that there is no need to have a clear idea of patterns one is searching for, especially in deductive studies, where one’s interest in a particular field is clear. (Mortensen 2019)

Using the thematic approach helps the researcher to see and make sense of collective meanings and identify patterns of themes in the data collected in interviews. (Mortensen 2019)

Aronson (1995) also pointed out that the focus of thematic analysis is the distinguishable patterns of themes of the living or the behaviour. According to Aronson (1995), the first step of thematic analysis is to collect data. Next, the author is to identify all the data that correlates with the already identified patterns. The following step is to combine and classify all related patterns into sub-categories, then grouped into a bigger category, from which an encompassing theme emerges. Themes can be derived

from a multitude of patterns, related to feelings or visuals for instance, and clarified by gathering fragments of ideas or experiences. When the author refers back to the literature when analysing the “themes”, she gains knowledge that allows her to make inferences from the interview. The findings intertwined with the literature help the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the topic and allow the reader to better comprehend the process and motivation of the researcher (Aronson 1995).

First of all, two interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed and presented as a written account. The first interview recorded with Resp. 1 was recorded using the English language. The second interview with Resp. 2 was recorded using the author’s native language - Vietnamese. Then, the second interview was transcribed and translated into the English language. After that, chunks of data were grouped together in their sub-categories and generalized into categories, from which themes emerged. As shown in Table 2, there are five themes emerged from the data analysis: Consistency and Cohesiveness, Adjusting to current trends, Storytelling, Personalization and Feedback. These themes were found and labelled with different colours and names, so as to facilitate the results presentation.

Audio recorded interview	Respondent	Content data code	Sub-category	Category	Theme
1	1	We had to have, one and a half year ago, certain adjustments. Because you have to adjust this with the time. When the hotel was opened, there were certain things of that time, but now, things are more modernized or we are doing things in other ways and guests have other expectations.	meeting expectations	customer needs	Adjusting to current trends
2	2	For example, when you see a logo, or name, a merchandise of the hotel or any marketing material, then they must recognize that its Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. And that is the success of a brand.	packaging	branding	Consistency and cohesiveness
1	1	At the start of 2016, we had a complete rebranding so that we could have a guideline that guarantees that customers anywhere when they see something related to the hotel, online or offline, they can the consistency of the brand.	rebranding	branding	
2	2	For example, before, the color of the hotel is blue, then different shades of blue is used, or the design of the electronic sign boards, or posters, then before, with any program, we designed each in a different way, not showing consistency.	coloring	branding	
1	1	So that when mentioning Hanoi Daewoo, they think about one of the first five star hotels in Hanoi. What this hotel offers, quality rooms, and high quality service. And what story this hotel wants to tell: tell a legendary of one of the first 5 star hotel in Hanoi. And until now is over 20 years old.	history of delivering high quality	branding	Story telling
2	2	Social media helps you tell your brand story, in the most intimate and personal way. And easy as well, to our target audience. Because social media allows you to target your customers very precisely, rather than using mass communication tools by e.g buying “golden hours” ads on TV, which is extremely costly.	precise targeting	targeting	Personalization
1	1	Social media is a double edged knife. Especially in handling crises, when there is negative feedback, instead of customers sending letters and resolving internally. Now with social media, customers can post on different channels and everyone can see.	customer response	interaction	Feedback

Table 2. Example of the data analysis process

3.5 Research Ethics and Verification of Results

Both quantitative and qualitative researchers need credibility of research. The credibility of a qualitative research depends on not only the effort and capability of the researcher, but it also encompasses validity and reliability (Bashir, Afzal & Azeem 2008).

Reliability is seen as the extent to which a research is far from measurement errors since the more measurement errors occur the less reliable the research is. (McMillan & Schumacher 2001 2006). This definition somewhat resembles the idea that reliability indicates possible uncomplicated replications of studies with employment of the same methodological procedures, and obtainment of the same outcomes. (Clont 1992)

Stenbacka (2001) describes the notion reliability as one of the quality concepts in qualitative research which has “to be solved in order to claim a study as part of proper research.” Reliability is viewed as “purpose of explaining” in quantitative research and “generating understanding” in qualitative research. (Stenbacka 2001)

However, Stenbacka (2001) argues that the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research, if a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good.”

On the other hand, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used “dependability” to closely resemble the notion of “reliability” in qualitative research. This concept is endorsed by Clont (1992) adding that dependability also involves the concept of consistency and reliability in qualitative research.

Cresswell & Miller (2000) contended that the validity of a research is affected by the researcher’s perception of validity and his or her choice of paradigm assumption. Validity refers to the appropriateness of the inferences made about the results of an assessment. Inferences refer to the conclusions that came out of empirical evidence. (Messick 1989)

Cook and Campbell (1979) define validity as “the best available approximation to the truth or falsity of a given inference, proposition or conclusion”. Some other views on validity include the notion of whether the research successfully delivers on what it

intended to and whether the results are accurate and trustworthy enough. (Joppe 2006)

Second of all, the author must follow a code of ethics in the process of doing this research. Ethics refers to the appropriateness of one's behavior in relations to the rights of the people who are part of his or her work or affected by it. (Saunders 2009 p. 183)

Following a code of ethics makes sure that the author does not go astray from the behavioral norms established by the university as your research is likely to be guided by the university's code of ethics or guidelines. The author must guarantee the way the research is designed meets the methodological as well as moral standards, and is defensible to those involved. (Saunders 2009 p. 184)

Aspects of ethics need to be taken into consideration in doing this research. The data must be collected without inflicting harm or injure to anyone, and must be with given consent and confidentiality. According to Showkat (2017), a researcher has the following responsibility towards the participants:

Firstly, informed consent from the participants must obtained. This is one of the primary obligation of the researcher. It is one of the standard procedures in professional code of ethics, in which participants have the right to give consent to participate, withdraw from, or refuse to take part in the research.

Second of all, all risks related to the research must be presented to the participants by the researcher. All negative and positive aspects of participating in the research must be clarified to the participants during the consent process, including the aim, objectives, nature of research, duration of the research, and other important information.

In addition, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality issues must be taken into consideration in discussion with the participants. The data collected must be kept secure and the real names of the participants must not be presented without their consent.

As an interviewer, the author had to make sure she obtained the consent to do the interview from the interviewees. The respondents participated in the interview vol-

untarily. They gave their verbal consent on audio recording as well as for further usage of data collected in the interviews. They also gave the author the permission to use their real names for the purpose of doing this research. Each person was aware of the research's topic and objectives as they were disclosed by the author prior to the interview.

Secondly, the author designed the research, planned and collected data in a manner that does not undermine the code of ethics or cause negative consequences to the people involved. The data collected from the interview is transcribed by the author with no distortion or of information. The results presented are completely free of judgements and own opinions of the author.

Finally, the author also acknowledged the plagiarism issues. Therefore, all sources used are referenced, including concepts and citations produced by other authors.

4 Results

As mentioned in the data analysis, five themes emerged from the data collected from the interviews: Consistency and Cohesiveness, Adjusting to current trends, Storytelling, and Feedback. These five themes will be presented and clarified through the comments and insights of Resp. 1 and Resp. 2.

4.1 Consistency and Cohesiveness

Consistency and cohesiveness is one of the overarching themes that emerged from the data. It is demonstrated through the social media content of different activities, how the products and services are presented and establishing the brand image that is Hanoi Daewoo Hotel across its social media platforms.

When asked about the importance of brand awareness to Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, according to the General Manager (resp. 1) and PR Manager (resp. 2) of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, to any hotel or brand working in the hospitality industry brand awareness is extremely important.

Resp. 1 supports this notion:

“Raising brand awareness is crucial to any brand, not only in the hotel industry, which is why Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has done a great many thing to try to do this. So that when mentioning Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, they think about one of the best hotels in Hanoi. This is why we are very consistent in every aspect, from product to service, online and offline.”

Resp. 2 added:

“For example, when you see a logo, or name of the hotel or any marketing material, then they must recognize that this is Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. That is what makes the success of a brand. So really, it is all about having consistency in everything we do and produce, tangible and intangible.”

There is high competition in the hotel industry of Hanoi for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel that it is crucial that its brand makes a lasting impression on the customer’s mind. Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is also an independent hotel, unlike the big famous hotel chains or corporations. In Hanoi, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has competition such as Hilton Hotel Hanoi, Intercontinental Hanoi, Sheraton Hotel Hanoi, JW Marriott Hanoi. That is why it is important to let people know who Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is and what makes it unique and stand out from its competition. There are many factors that make the hotel different. This is presented by resp. 2:

“Although the big hotel chains are more well-known, they are usually very strict and rigorous in their guideline, rules and regulations, ordered from the very top management of board executives. Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has a slight advantage as an independent hotel in that they have some extent of freedom in the way they do marketing in the PR and marketing department and the freedom in the creative process and creating content that they think can get them closer to the hearts of the customers, while still respecting the general guideline of the hotel.”

Resp. 2 also supports this:

“With the freedom that we have compared to international hotel chains like that, we have to deliver our brand in way that makes us stand out and get our mission and vision unanimously across all channels and platforms.”

Resp. 1 added:

“Not only the things that we do online, making sure everything is relevant and highlights who we are as a brand, but in our appearance as a brand as well. Everything from the logo, slogan, the packing of our products, the colors, the font, the design, etc. they all have to be cohesive and work seamlessly together to represent the brand that is Hanoi Daewoo Hotel”

Resp. 2 shared:

“We are a little bit more old-style compared to the younger, more modern hotels in Hanoi, but that is part of our brand, and we make sure to show that as well, to embrace that to attract the right type of customers.”

Resp. 2 touched on another aspect:

“One of our brand awareness, our strong points, is our human touch. Human touch means our staff. Our staff, they make a difference. Staff members play a very important role in our hotel. Our language is hospitality, regardless of age, nationality, religion, sex, a guest is a guest. That’s one of our messages that we are trying to convey so the guests can understand that, to really see it and feel it.”

4.2 Adjusting to current trends

Having a good brand is crucial for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. It is so important that in the process of creating and raising awareness for the brand, something is likely to go wrong which means you have to take a different route and start again. That is why adjusting to current trends is an important theme that emerged from the data. In this case, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel had to undergo a complete rebranding process.

Resp.1 presented:

“At the start of 2016, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has done a complete rebranding to re-establish its brand guideline. Certain adjustments were made, because they had to adjust their business with the time. When the hotel was opened, there were certain ways of doing things but now, things have been modernized and people are doing things in different ways, and guests have different expectations. “

Resp. 2 also added to this opinion:

“For example, before, the color of the hotel is blue, then different shades of blue are used, or the design of the electronic sign boards, or posters, then before, with any program, they designed each in a different way. So after the rebranding, the hotel has a guideline, where, for example, when doing poster, the top half is blue, headline has to be light blue, and below is the photo. This guarantees that customers anywhere when they see something related to the hotel, online or offline, they can see the consistency of the brand.”

“We had to go through this whole rebranding process, one and a half year ago, because there were certain adjustments to be made. Because you have to adjust this with the time. When the hotel was opened, there were certain things of that time, but now, things are more modernized or we are doing things in other ways and guests have other expectations.”

Resp. 2 shared:

“We are also constantly going through our customer reviews and feedback. This helps us gain insights to improve our services, to adjust to different customers’ needs and demands. We also keep good relationships with the press, partners, competition. So that we can be the first to catch up with all the latest current trends and news in the industry.”

When asked about the pros and cons of social media, Resp. 1 shared:

“In terms of opportunities, social media definitely will continue to be one of the most efficient tool to help target specific customers, at a specific time, at the right time, at the right places, with the specific budget, which is better than using traditional channels, which is broad and vague and not specifically targeted. Especially nowadays, hotels are always changing and shifting the type of customers they have.”

Resp. 2 commented on this view:

“Before, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel targeted older customers. Now, social media is a channel that enables us to reach out to the millennials and younger audience to market our brand, which has seen outstanding results with the number of younger customers increasing year by year. Hence, these are definitely some of the opportunities for using social media for the hotel.”

Resp. 1 added:

"Social media is good for measuring results and marketing effectiveness, since it comes with analytics, so you can track everything you are doing and how well you are doing it."

4.3 Storytelling

The theme of storytelling is conspicuous on social media pages of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. Storytelling when raising brand awareness means creating brand associations and invoking emotions that are easy for the customers to link to the brand. In the hotel industry, it is important that you provide the highest quality service possible, from the littlest things like cleanliness to how to communicate brand story that leaves a lasting impression on the customers. Respondent 1 supported this notion:

"When mentioning Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, customers should think about one of the first five-star hotels in Hanoi. Customers think about what this hotel offers: quality rooms, and high quality service; what story this hotel wants to tell: the legendary of one of the first five-star hotels in Hanoi, and until now, is over 20 years old."

Resp. 2 supported with measures of how the hotel creates brand awareness for customers:

"All the branding activities, online, offline, public relations, have the common goal of ensuring that when hearing of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel then customers know of these things. To sum up, the ultimate goal of raising brand awareness is to raise a correct perception of the hotel in the customer's mind."

Resp. 2 also added:

"We always create events that align with our brand, what we stand for, our history. We always want to convey the message that Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is one of the first five-star hotels of the capital. We celebrated our 20th anniversary with a special art program "The 20-year imprint" in 2016, which was one of the most meaningful events so far."

Resp. 1 continued:

“20 years is a proud journey of Hanoi Daewoo hotel to become the symbolic hotel of Hanoi and the spiritual heritage of the people of the capital. We welcomed more than 400 guests, including: ambassadors, representatives of departments, ministries, branches, central and local press agencies... Hundreds of close partners and customers have been with the hotel for the past 20 years.

Resp. 2 added:

“The hotel was established on October 30, 1996, and it became the largest hotel in the city at that time. At the time, Daewoo went into operation with 411 rooms, with views of West Lake and the park, etc., everything was beyond people’s expectations.”

The storytelling theme is also reflected through the social media posts.

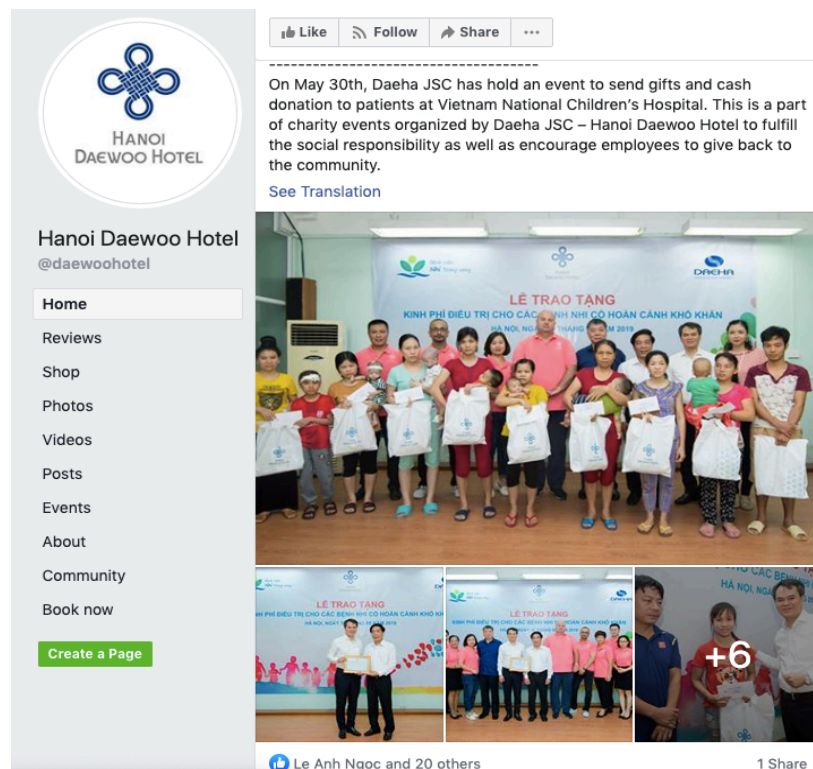


Figure 7. Facebook Page of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel (2019)

As can be seen in Figure 7, the Facebook post of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is of a charity event. The General Manager personally joined and spoke at the event.

Resp. 1 shared:

“We always try to give back to society in every way we can. For instance, we recently held an event to send gifts and cash donation to patients at Vietnam National Chil-

dren's Hospital. This is a part of charity events organized by Daeha JSC – Hanoi Daewoo Hotel to fulfil the social responsibility as well as encourage employees to give back to the community."

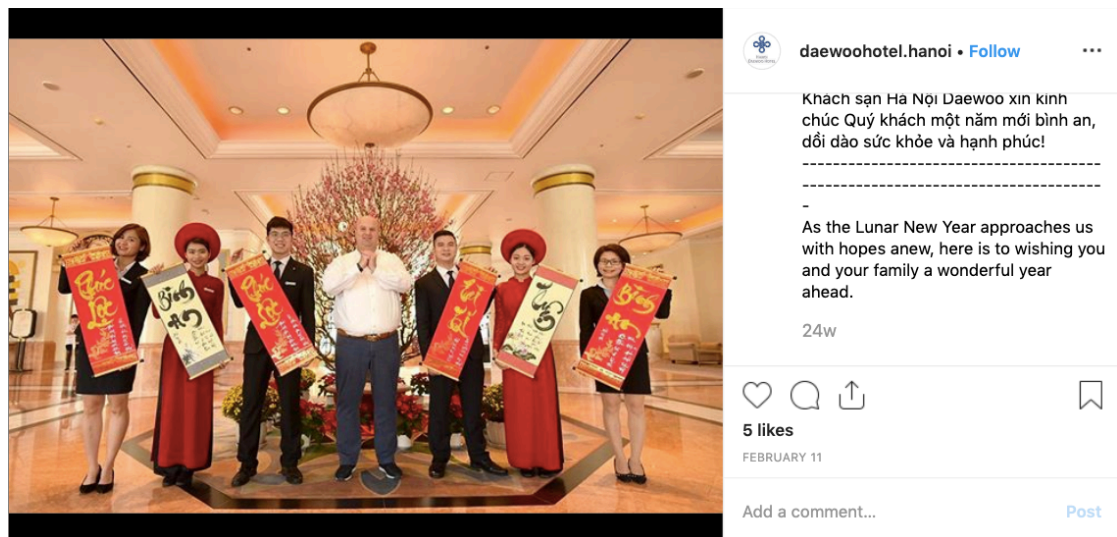


Figure 8. Instagram account of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel (2019)

As can be seen in Figure 8, this is an Instagram post that features the General Manager of the hotel as he wishes the customers a safe, happy, and prosperous Lunar new year. This is an example of personalized message that aim at the Vietnamese customers or Asian customers who celebrate Lunar New Year. But at the same time, the message is that the hotel cares about traditions and cherish national holidays.

Currently, there are 294 followers on the Instagram account of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, with 876 posts. The content consists of brand-related content such as introducing the famous drinks, dishes of the hotel, discounts, special promotion packages, holiday-themed posts, photos of Hanoi, events and activities that the hotel is involved in. There is a wide diversity of content, which is why it has a relatively high following and engagement rate, second to Facebook.

"What we are trying to convey through social media is that we are a traditional hotel type, even though we are very international, at our roots, we still have a deep appreciation and respect for Vietnamese traditions and that shows through our events and activities online and offline."

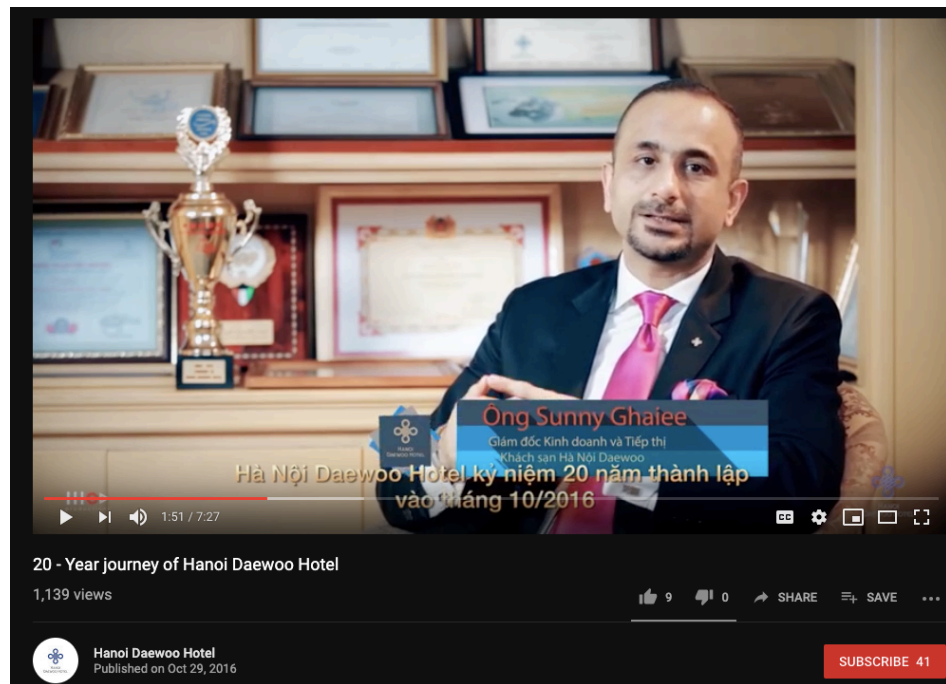


Figure 9. YouTube channel of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel (2019)

As shown in Figure 9, one of the videos on the YouTube channel of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is about the journey of the hotel for the past 20 years. The video features milestones and accomplishments of the hotel since its opening, and also expressing gratitude for the customers, as well as staff and employees that have been helping the hotel on this journey. This shows that the hotel gave a targeted personalized message for each stakeholder of the company, not taking anything or anyone for granted.

To Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, establishing brand credibility on social media is the ultimate goal for any brand when they are present on social media. Credibility is everything, is part of the brand of the hotel. As resp. 1 shared: “If you cannot create credibility, then no one will trust your brand, which means that you have failed in branding.”

Resp. 1 further explained:

“In everything that Hanoi Daewoo does, firstly, we want to create a positive brand image in their customer’s mind. Secondly, we want customers to have the right awareness of who we are, how we are and what our story is: a leading five-star hotel with high ranking, a renowned figure in the hotel industry. When customers think about Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, customers think of a legendary, where has received many

VIPs, with the biggest outdoor swimming pool in Hanoi, etc. Everything we do has to be about getting that message across.”

In short, social media helps Hanoi Daewoo Hotel tell their brand story to targeted audience, in a relatable and authentic way. Resp. 2 added:

“Social media allows us to target customers very precisely, rather than using mass communication tools by, for instance, buying “golden hours” ads on TV, which is extremely costly. Now, with social media and a specific marketing budget, businesses can target specifically who they want to target and tell their brand story to their customers.”

4.4 Personalization

Personalization is a theme consistent in the social media strategy of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, from creating content geared towards a specific audience, for a specific occasion or on certain platforms, to making every stakeholder feel included and recognized with personalized messages through video content.

According to Resp. 1:

“Like most big famous hotels in Vietnam as well as worldwide, the social media channels used by Hanoi Daewoo Hotel are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. The target customers of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel are 25-45. So, social media is undoubtedly one of the main marketing channels for this target group.”

Because the main focus of the hotel is on the Vietnamese market, Facebook and Instagram are utilized the most, since those are the leading social media platforms in Vietnam, according to Statista (2018).



Figure 10. Twitter account of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel (2019)

As can be seen in Figure 10, a Twitter post about a Moon cake making class of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, in celebration of the Mid-Autumn festival, the General Manager Erwin Popov (Resp. 1), personally showed up at the event, to host the event and made the mooncakes alongside the customers, which made it more personal for the participants and gave them a feeling of being closer to the manager, to the brand. It gave off a feeling of a relaxed environment where there is no boundary between the manager, employees and customers. As Resp.1 said: *“There is nothing like a personalized experience as it leaves an undoubtable impression on the customers.”*

Resp. 2 shared another point:

“Twitter is more popular with the foreign market so that why the hotel focuses on this channel to target foreign customers. Other than that, YouTube is also a great platform and we upload on there when there is video content to be uploaded. For example, we have a video introducing the new mooncake collection of the hotel, which was filmed and edited professionally as part of a promotion campaign.”

The Twitter account of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has 41 followers, which is comparatively low compared to other social media channels.

According to Resp. 2:

“Since Twitter is mainly used to target foreigners, there are not many likes and shares per post. However, we still keep this channel active for there is a Vietnamese following as well. There are regular posts but the engagement rate is generally low.”

According to the resp. 2:

“We try to utilize the most suitable channel and platform for specific customer target. We always do social media posts in 2 languages: English and Vietnamese. We try to make content that sparks feelings, emotions in the audience in some way, whether it is excitement, nostalgia, or calling to vote...”

“Among the channels, Facebook is the most active channel with the most engagement rate. This is the platform with the highest number of followers and likes, where we engage younger customers as well as keep updated with older ones.”

There are almost 26K likes and 26K followers on its Facebook page. Overall, there are more likes, comments and shares on Facebook posts compared to other social media channels.

YouTube channel of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has 39 followers and 30 videos. The views per video range from 100 to 2K, depends on the video content. The content is diverse, including instruction videos on how to make a certain dish of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, introduction of the mooncake collection of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, special events or celebrations of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, among other types of video. The length of the video is from 1-20 minutes.

Resp. 2 also added:

“There is also LinkedIn, which is managed by the HR department, but its main purpose is for recruitment. We don’t really use LinkedIn for marketing purposes, but for networking with other businesses. Other than that, the hotel is also present on TripAdvisor among many different online travel agencies websites like booking.com, agoda.com, etc. Before, the hotel also used Google Plus but that has proven to be ineffective, hence, it was stopped March 2019.”

There are many aspects to the creation of content of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. The top management, General Manager Mr. Popov (Resp. 1) wants more content about discounts and sales promotions, which is all brand-generated content. However, the PR

manager (Resp.2) wants to have more posts that have more of a user- human touch to it. As a PR Manager, Ms. Ngoc works with many different clients and customers.

Resp. 2 shared her opinion:

“For example, when customers post about their experience on the beach at one of the hotel’s events on Instagram, or in other PR events, the hotel takes photos of the guests, those types of content tend to get more shares on social media. Or at a pool party event, the guests will get a card that says please go on to our Facebook page to see your photo. Everyone that goes to events wants to see their photo, or photos with them in it. That is why Hanoi Daewoo Hotel wants to focus more on those content.”

Hanoi Daewoo Hotel hires a professional photographer at almost every event to take photos of the event and people. “When customers are aware that their photos are taken professionally and beautifully, they will immediately go to their Facebook and social media to see and repost, share their photos that have been taken of them, as if they were a souvenir. Those photos are memories of their daily life that they want to share with others, and for them to look back on as well.” – Resp. 2 added.

Resp. 1 also shared:

“Those types of content get shared more than the posts about discount and sales promotions. There are, however, exceptions when they are really big discounts and sales promotions, for example, once a year, like a mega discount, then it will probably get more shares.”

Nonetheless, in general, when the hotel reminds the customer of a memory or experience that they have had, when they look at their photos then chances of sharing are higher, compared to content that talks about the hotel itself, a specific drink or dish that is popular at the hotel at the moment, which is most of the content at Hanoi Daewoo Hotel these days. When brands make brand-related content, it is likely that customers will only see them, maybe leave a comment or like, but most unlikely to share.

Resp. 2 supported this opinion:

“Hanoi Daewoo Hotel wants to focus more on the kind of content with the customers in it or the human side to it. Either the hotel reposts the content of customers being in one of the events, or credit or tag them in the hotel page’s posts about the events they attended.”

Resp. 2 also shared:

“Mini-games are also ones that get shared quite often, for the benefit that comes with their participation in the games such as receiving prizes or awards. Besides that, there are also posts about tips when travelling for example that customers find useful and interesting then they probably share that too.”

In short, personalized content can be user-generated content gets more engagement, such as photos that are posted by the customers who attended one of the brand’s events; for marketer-generated content, there are games, really big and attractive, mega sales promotions, special events with celebrities or featuring guest chef, etc. Obviously when customers share this type of content on their social media network, many people will see that. This leads to brand exposure and positive brand awareness for those who have never heard of the brand before, and for those who have, their brand image will be reinforced.

According to Resp. 2, there are normally social media posts 3-4 times a week from Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. However, the frequency of posts depends on activities of the hotel or if it is holiday season.

Resp. 2 shared:

“It depends on whether the hotel is having an event or not, in which case they usually post more, to follow the timeline of the event, especially when it is a big special event. For example, the food festival week, the posting frequency is higher, before, during and after the event, to update customers.”

Moreover, depending on the different social media platforms and their main features, the final version to be posted on each platform is slightly modified to accentuate the primary function of the channel, but the general content is preserved and consistent throughout all platforms.

Resp. 2 presented in support of this:

“For example, on Instagram, there is little text and more focus more on the photo, so they have to create a captivating caption and story. If we have the budget, we can do many more things of higher quality on these platforms. For example, we can hire a photographer to capture the perfect photo to post on Instagram or Instagram story, Instagram photos that look good on Instagram. If we post exactly what they post on Facebook on Instagram, that is not always effective and impactful.”

Resp. 1 also added:

“It is important to pick the right filter and color, and the perfect photo, there needs to be people, etc. to attract Instagram users. Facebook has a different photo layout and focuses on text. Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet so we have to be concise and impactful. We do not copy paste the same exact thing to every channel. The same general content but the delivery is customized to suit the main feature of each channel. Therefore, it all depends on the budget to be able to do these things. Big hotel chains which have the budget can do this easily.”

In terms of raising brand awareness for domestic customers and foreign customers, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel uses different techniques, and ways of marketing depending on different markets, and personalize to resonate with the values and cultures of each target group.

Resp. 1 supported:

“For example, when they do advertising for foreigners, they run ads and design ads differently and customize the message to suit the target audience. There are tailor-made messages and photos. There cannot be one match for everyone. For Vietnamese people, the hotel customizes the ads to what the cultural values and preferences of the target group.”

In brand awareness, there are two dimensions: Brand recall and brand recognition. For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, it is important that they focus on both dimensions at the same time. Depends on the target customer, they implement different methods to increase brand recognition and brand recall.

Resp. 1 commented on this:

“We have to retain both our current customers as well as reach out to new ones and find new leads. Therefore, the need for brand recall for customer retention is absolutely crucial. We want to create a brand loyalty with our current customers. To the audience that has been long time customers and clients and have been there with Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, they focus we want them to remember the brand, to remind them of the brand and to reinforce the image of the brand so that when customers hear about the hotel industry in Hanoi, they immediately think of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. On the other hand, brand recognition is for new customers, those who have only heard briefly on Hanoi Daewoo Hotel or heard someone else talk about it but do not remember too much.”

Resp. 2 elaborated on the answer, saying that brand recognition and brand recall are two consecutive steps to build brand awareness:

“For customers who don’t know about Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the focus is on social media activities that help with brand recognition, for example, to run ads on Facebook, posts on sales promotion programs with discounted room prices, to capture customers’ attention, and get them to notice our brand, to create a position in the customer’s mind that there is Hanoi Daewoo Hotel among the best five-star hotels in Hanoi. Once they have successfully reached the brand recognition level with these customers, they move on to the next stage which is brand recall, with activities reminding and reinforcing the brand image in their minds, for example, with interaction on social media, or different programs, or games to remind and retain customers.”

Online communities are important in building the online reputation of the hotel. A good feedback, indicating good customer’s experience, helps raise your reputation, and helps bring about a positive perception of your brand, a positive brand image. When customers are happy and satisfied with the service, they will obviously have a positive opinion of the brand. Vice versa, when customers share negative, bad reviews of their experience, then that will detrimentally affect the brand’s online reputation.

Resp. 2 supported this opinion:

“The brand image that Hanoi Daewoo Hotel wants to create and come across to our online communities is that this is a professional five-star hotel of reputation and credibility, a leading brand in the hotel industry in Hanoi. We do not want to communicate with their online communities in an informal and casual way. Rather, with every communication and interaction that we have with online customers is a demonstration of our own standard method of communication and way of responding that reflects our class and rank as a hotel in the industry.”

4.5 Feedback

Feedback is one of the most prominent themes throughout the findings of this research. It is truly the backbone that lays the foundation for other themes to be developed. Without feedback, there cannot be personalization or suitable adjustments to trends. For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, TripAdvisor, where there is mostly user-generated content, highlights the theme of feedback, alongside Facebook. The hotel values feedback and constructive criticism, for constantly innovating and adjusting to meet customer needs and expectations.

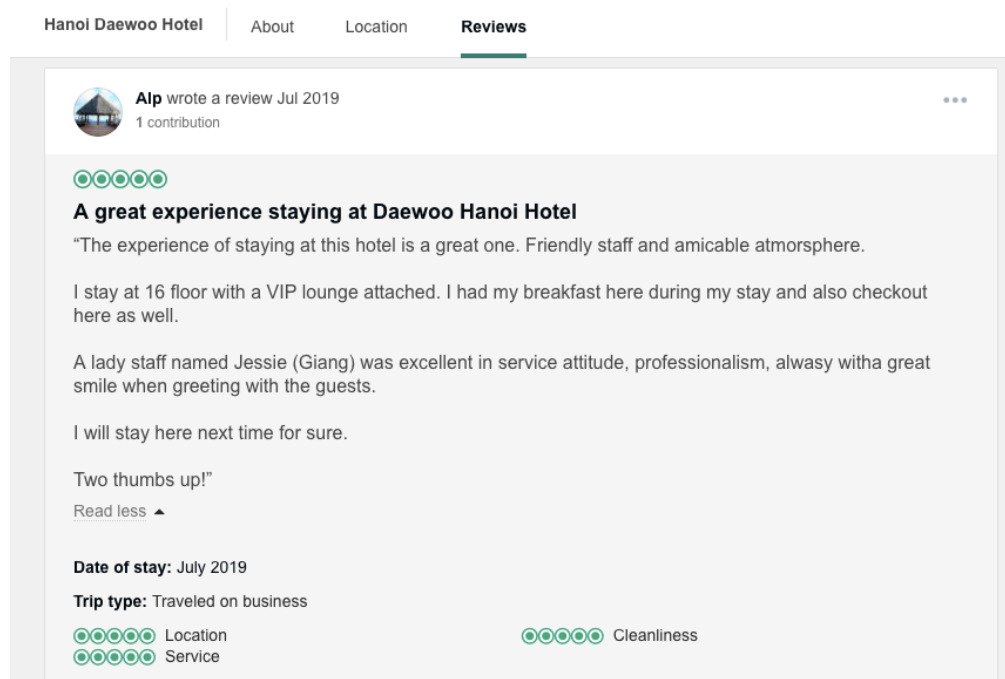


Figure 11. TripAdvisor review

As can be seen in Figure 11, a customer gave Hanoi Daewoo Hotel a rating of five stars on TripAdvisor, complimenting on his “great experience, friendly staff, and amicable atmosphere.”

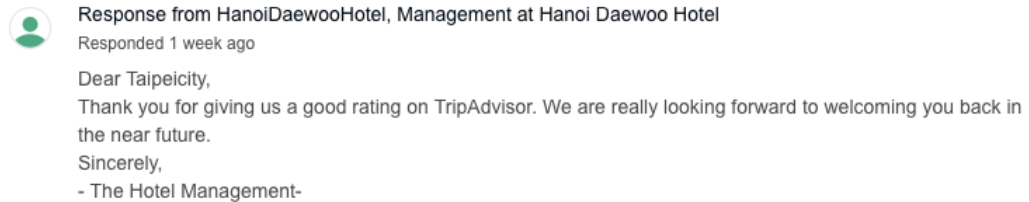


Figure 12. Response to customer review on TripAdvisor 1

As can be seen from Figure 12, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has responded to this TripAdvisor review, expressing their appreciation for taking the time to leave a review of the hotel and hope for their return.

Resp. 2 shared:

“When you reply to positive feedback, it holds just as much as value and importance to the customer, even if they already had a pleasant experience, when we respond immediately, they are even happier, and it will make a complete experience for them and for us. Therefore, interaction is a foundation that leads to positive word of mouth.”



Figure 13. Response to customer review on TripAdvisor 2

As can be seen in Figure 13, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel handled a negative customer review with grace and professionalism. The company gave thanks for taking the time to comment and gave an apology for any inconvenience caused to the customer. At the end, saying that they are trying their best to fix the problem, and again expresses gratitude for the feedback. This is an example of personalized feedback that helps create deeper understanding and empathy between the brand and customer.

Resp. 1 added:

“We also try respond in a way that is professional but also close and personalized in a way that shows that we understand the problem or appreciate the review that they gave. Personalized interaction is definitely key when it comes to customer management, especially on social media when it is less formal compared to email, we try to sound approachable and always ready to help.”

Resp. 1 shared some insights:

“To Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, staying active on social media always comes with being responsiveness: quick response to our customer’s interaction. The quick response rate will serve as an advantage for us, as well as listening to customers on various different channels and feedback to them quickly and consistently. This will make the customers feel appreciated. The rate of response is usually within 12 hours maximum, but they try to do it as soon as possible.”

Resp. 2 specified:

“For the satisfied customers, if we interact well with them, they will become, in a way, like our brand ambassador. And they will always spread positive word of mouth about our brand. Interaction with satisfied customers also contributes to the ability of the customer to recall our brand more easily, because they feel they are appreciated. Each customer has their own networks and communities. They can recommend our hotel to them if they can recall us better. Therefore, online interaction is key and it kills many birds with one stone. For the unsatisfied customers, how we interact with them, how we handle the situation, helps us avoid negative influence to our brand and prevent the negativity from spreading further.”

According to Resp. 2:

“Before social media, it was relatively difficult to get into contact or meet with a brand department, or marketing department of a hotel. One would have to call in and then reception will take the call and transfer the call, etc. But now, with the growth of social media, in a situation where you are unhappy with something, you can just access their Facebook page and complain. Customers can post what they think immediately.”

Resp. 1 supported this opinion:

“As hotels, we have the responsibility to reply to them. Even more, we as a brand, have to look for our customer’s feedback and comments and respond to them, to resolve the problem. So, it is also about being proactive on social media to resolve customer’s issues quickly if needed. And vice versa, if customers want to know something about the hotel really quickly then they can do that immediately on social media. For instance, on Facebook Messenger, Instagram Direct Message, or reviews or questions on TripAdvisor. To sum up, there are many ways customers can approach and have access to brands nowadays thanks to social media.”

Resp. 1 specified on this point:

“For example, when customers give a negative review or leave a complaint on a social media platform, if after investigating and they realize that it is their fault, then firstly, they will publicly apologize to the customer on those channels, then also find his or her personal contact and personally apologize to them as well. They will try to deal with the problem with no hope that the customer will take the post down, but they want for the customer to have another experience, to give them another chance, to prove themselves. Then the customer can decide themselves if they want to take the negative post down or not.”

Hanoi Daewoo does everything with the utmost sincerity and devotion to their customers and clients. Fortunately, these things rarely happen and if they do, they only happen on TripAdvisor, or online review channels. There are hotels that hire people to write good reviews about themselves and to hype themselves up. For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, credibility means always being honest with the customers so they never do anything of sorts. *“All of the reviews of our hotel are the customer’s own personal honest opinions who have had experience using our service”*, according to Respondent 2.

Evidently, we are in the era of industry 4.0, and customers now are connected customers, with the constant use of mobile devices, phones, tabs, laptops to access the internet and social media becoming our everyday habit. Hence, alongside traditional marketing, social media plays a crucial role in building a brand, for new customers.

To old customers, social media helps businesses to interact and engage with customers to retain them.

Resp. 1 elaborated on the opinion:

“Social media helps us manage and monitor the online reputation. To a hotel, online reputation plays a hugely important role. With tools such as Facebook reviews or reviews on TripAdvisor, bookings.com, agoda.com, Expedia, etc. where users’ opinions are at the core, these are all tools to help us monitor our -online reputation. Staying active on these channels helps us listen to customers, what they think of our brand, to make suitable adjustments and improvements.”

Resp. 2 added:

“Also, listening to negative feedback helps us make further actions accordingly, for instance, to contact customers to deal with these types of feedback. The goal is to try to avoid communication crises. Therefore, it is crucial that we manage these things from the early stages when customers leave a comment or feedback, and we try to respond as soon as possible.”

Resp. 2 also commented:

“For example, there are a lot of online groups where people comment and talk about certain restaurants or hotels, so it is important that the brand be present there as well. These pages help a business know what kind of experience their customers have had when using their service. If it’s a positive experience, then it is the brand’s responsibility to interact, to thank them etc., to respond to positive feedback, which is equally necessary and important as responding to negative feedback.”

In terms of challenges, social media is a double-edged knife. Especially in handling crises, when there is negative feedback, instead of customers sending letters and resolving internally. Now with social media, customers can post on different channels and everyone can see, which is detrimental to the reputation of the hotel. So that can be a challenge that requires the marketing team to be agile and flexible when handling tricky situations quickly, and skillfully, so that customers are satisfied, so that negativity will not be spread.

Resp. 2 added one of the challenges of social media:

“Social media will always be just one of the marketing channels, we cannot just fully rely on social media forever, because today it can be here, the next it might not. Social media is very erratic and unpredictable. It is very much user-focused and we cannot always control the Internet users. For instance, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has stopped using Google Plus that we had been using for a long time, this goes to show that someday, we might not use the channels that they use now anymore.”

Commenting on overcoming challenges that come with social media, Resp. 2 expressed:

“Due to all the good and challenges that come with using social media to raise brand awareness, it is pivotal that brands maintain and balance the various different marketing channels, because the customers on Facebook and social media are only targeted customers. Anyone of any age can use and access Facebook but that does not necessarily mean all of them are active on Facebook all the time. Therefore, it is important that businesses devise the budget reasonably and be present on traditional marketing channels as well. The digital and traditional methods need to work together, to be used in conjunction with one another and support each other to enhance brand awareness.”

5 Discussion

5.1 Answers to research questions and assessment of results in light of literature review

To answer the research question: “What is the impact of social media on customer’s brand awareness?”, the author has explored the aspects of social media marketing and social media dimensions and their impact on brand awareness, in the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, through the supportive sub-question: “How do social media marketing and social media dimensions impact brand awareness?”

5.1.1 The impact of social media marketing on brand awareness

Social media has introduced a new era of exponential dissemination and a new trust to mass communication and mass marketing. (Hafele 2011) Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has

utilized social media marketing with a variety of content, encompassing user-generated and marketer-generated content.

Marketer-generated content

According to Jelyta (2015), marketer-generated content is more favorable to already existing users of the brand who would like to be kept abreast of the brand and its latest doings. According to the findings, this is proven to be true as most of the followers of the Hanoi Daewoo Hotel Facebook and Instagram pages are mostly old long-time customers. That is why sometimes the posts seem to gear towards older customers, more traditional customers. The majority of social media posts of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel are marketer-generated content.

These brand posts are more frequent, with the aim to inform and update their customers as well as other online users of the developments and offers regarding the brand. (Jelyta 2015) This is true for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel as they often post about the different events and activities the company is involved in, which tend to get more customer engagement. The posts of mini games with prizes or giveaways, discounts, promotions, invites to events, generated by the brand on social media also tend to have better engagement.

With links to the main hotel website in every post, it helps drive traffic from these social posts to the main page of the hotel, which potentially leads to possible purchases. In a way, this has increased customer brand awareness of the hotel in an online social setting.

For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the content that receives the highest engagement rate is related to public relations events. For example, customers post about their experience on a press event at the hotel, with the guests in the photos, those types of content tend to get more likes and shares on social media. Everyone that goes to events wants to see photos of them.

For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, marketer-generated content is also about storytelling, like one of themes of the data analysis. Hanoi Daewoo Hotel constantly tries to create content that resonate with people's feelings, remind them of traditions and appreciation of the little things, as well as giving back to society. For instance, Facebook

posts about Lunar New Year holiday, a charity that helps raise money for the disabled, or a collage of Instagram posts with pictures of Hanoi's streets on a fall afternoon with street vendors on their old bicycles, creating a sense of nostalgia and melancholy of the past.

This type of storytelling through content is what engages customers, makes them think and induces them to act. It is an opportunity for the brand to tell their story. By creating engaging and interesting content, the brand can create a unique and distinct voice that attracts more and more to customers, consequentially raising brand awareness (Fortier 2018).

According to the findings, marketer-generated content is also about consistency. Consistency in posting and in the content. For Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, they try to post 3-4 times a week. Every content created has to be presented with consistency across all channels and platforms, through a congruent tone and style. This will help create trust in the customer of the brand (Rotter 2016). You need to make sure the message you are trying to get across all platforms and channels is the same consistent one. In the case of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, this is true as there is an evident cohesion across all platforms in terms of content generated by the brand.

User-generated content

User-generated content is any type of content that has been created and distributed by unpaid contributors and users. It is created and shared with the aim to promote a particular brand completely unbiased by the users and not the brand itself. (Tint 2016) This type of content consists of pictures, videos, tweets, blogposts, etc.

A study by Baazarvoice found that 84% of millennials had expressed that at least some user-generated content on social media and the official web page of the brand exerts certain influence on the thought process of purchasing a product. (York 2018)

It has been estimated that 65% of social users aged 18 to 24 are reliant on their online networks in search for information and reviews of a product or service when making a decision. (York 2018)

User-generated content has been proven to boost brand awareness more than marketer-generated content. This is because we tend to trust other people than we do

brands. (York 2018) Referrals from friends and family of a product or service have been reported to lead to actual purchases four times higher than without referrals. Social media is extremely helpful when it comes to referrals, since everyone has their networks of friends and family on social media, whom they trust and whose opinions they value.

Brand awareness can be highly enhanced when the user decides to retweet a tweet or share a Facebook post for instance. This shared content is going to reach the network of each user, which means the brand has already been exposed to a much larger community of people. Comments and mentions on social media posts also help the brand to get quick exposure to potential leads. Hashtags are also a great way to get the users to talk about a brand and accumulate all those posts into one place that others can easily search for and be able to see. According to the findings, at the end of every social post of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, there are hashtags such as *#hanoidaewoohotel #hanoidaewoo #hotel #hanoi #vietnam* and depending on the content of the post, there can be *#christmas #holiday #celebration*, for instance. The brand can ask their customers to use these hashtags to join the online contests. Customers can join and use these hashtags when sharing a post of the brand and contribute to the brand's hashtag thread while spreading the word about the hotel to others, helping raise brand awareness.

Community content from consumers has proven to have a bigger impact on consumer purchase behavior, compared to marker-generated content. (Goh, Heng & Lin 2013) They have found that the activities carried out by the online communities and their engagement on social media in general lead to more positive purchase decisions. This is because when users and brands can have open discussions about brands and products, trust is built more quickly and easily. When customers trust your brand, they are more likely to recommend to their network of people, online and offline (York 2018).

The zones of social media

The use of different zones of social media or different social media platforms is what helps spread brand awareness more quickly. As different channels have their own followings, same as people have their own favorite websites that they prefer to use

more frequently than another. That is why it is crucial to be present on the most popular social media platforms, to reach all types of demographics of customers (Nagy 2017).

According to the findings of the research, it is worth remembering that each platform has its own purpose and unique feature. The brand must be aware of the use of each platform and tailor the content to suit the functionality, look and feel of the platform, to capture customer attention and maximize customer engagement.

Social communities such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, all of which Hanoi Daewoo Hotel is present on, focus on building the relationships and common activities that users take part in with those sharing the same interest or identification. (Tuten and Solomon 2018) Facebook is the most active and engaged channel of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, followed by Instagram and Twitter. These platforms feature a mix of marketer-generated content and user-generated content, where customers can share, socialize and converse. Through social communities, evidently, the hotel creates the opportunity connect to millions of potential customers, through whom brand awareness expands to their network of people, and the network of theirs and so on.

YouTube is a platform of social publishing used by Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, featuring videos created and produced by the brand itself. As YouTube has the second largest user population, over one billion monthly active users – behind Facebook (Wanjohi 2017), Hanoi Daewoo Hotel utilizes it as an effective marketing tool. Their YouTube videos engage audience with a variety of content, from introduction of new events, to interviews with managers, recap of events featuring clips of customers. According to the results, visual content is what the hotel will continuously invest in, since there is significantly higher likelihood that it is going to be circulated on social media compared to other content (Plomion 2018).

Social commerce assists customers' online activities of shopping, selling, buying of products and services, most outstanding platform being TripAdvisor (Tuten and Solomon 2018) Since 96% of TripAdvisor users consider reading reviews important before making decision (ReviewPro 2015), TripAdvisor plays a considerable role for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel in influencing customer's purchase decision, as all customers value authentic opinions of others. But the platform also highlights the theme of feedback in

data analysis, as it is what the hotel values, positive feedback and constructive criticism, for constantly innovating and adjusting to meet customer needs and expectations.

5.1.2 The impact of social media dimensions on brand awareness

Online communities

Social media helps bring online communities together. Without the information flow between the communities and the brands or businesses, there would be no serious engagement within the online communities. (Wanjohi 2017) The people who are fans of a brand can go online, on social media and join groups and like pages of the brand they like. Here, they can meet like-minded people who share the same interest. This would spark conversation and exchange of information. So that these strangers come together and become a community on the internet that grows together. These online communities help spread their common interest to their own group of networks. This consequently increases and enhances brand awareness and brand exposure for new customers, as well as old ones. On the contrary to what Keyton (2010) contends which is that brands create their own communities with their social network constructs, the findings from the interview states that the people form their own communities, brands do not create their online communities, but create a positive brand image online that customers can decide whether they want to become part of its online communities.

Sharing of content

The sharing of content on social media helps to raise brand awareness more effectively. In light of literature, this aspect of social media mentions the extent to which a person shares, receives and exchanges information in a social setting. (Babac 2011) This is also mentioned in the data collected. When brands post content that sparks interest in the customers, enough for them to share this content, this also spreads the word about the hotel to new customers. The interviews gave more insights into the types of content on social media, which links to the point of in literature, which is sharing of content dimension also places great emphasis on the content itself. (Kietzmann et al. 2011.) As mentioned in the key concepts, there are two types of social media content: marketer-generated content and user-generated content. Marketer-

generated or brand-related content such as discounts, promotions, events, etc. are rarely shared, and have a low engagement rate. However, if it is a mega discount or promotion that only happens once or twice a year, that might receive more attention. In addition, mini games or giveaways on social media also have a lot of shares since customers have the opportunity to receive prizes or awards. The type of content that generates the most shares are those that involve the customers, create souvenir and memories for customers, that they want to share with others. That can be either user-generated, for instance, customer posts about an event they attended of the brand, and the brand reposts, or brand-generated content, for instance, brand tags the customer in the photos taken at the event.

Interaction

Social media also facilitates interaction between brands and customers and customers with customers. This type of social online interaction can be called an extension on the traditional word of mouth communication. (Mothe 2012) Social media has many convenient features such as Facebook Messenger or Instagram Direct Message, that allow users to easily start conversation and interact with whoever they want online. For brands, this is a way for them to reach out and connect with customers, to learn more about their experience that they have had with the brand, their needs, and expectations. By listening to customers, brands are able to take all this feedback and make adjustments and improvements in their brand awareness measures. Interaction here also means when there are positive and negative reviews or comments about the brand made on any social media platform, the brand has the obligation to communicate with the customer in response to the feedback. If it is a positive review, for instance, they can send thank you notes or write a public thank you post. This makes the customer feel appreciated and will help generate good word of mouth. If it is a negative comment, the brand must reach out to the customer, after investigating and if it is the brand's fault, they must publicly and personally apologize to the customer.

There is a difference between the concept of interaction in literature review and data collected in the interviews. Interaction, according to Berselli, Burger, & Close (2012), encompasses the aspect of informing the users of a new update on social media. It talks about the digital notification aspect of interaction, that different social media

platforms that notify customers at the same time to update current events and helps facilitates interaction through broadcasting relevant information. (Fischer & Reuber 2011) The data collected on the interaction dimension only touches on the human factor in interaction. Personally, both aspects of interaction should be included, as the digital notifications from social media help keep customers constantly reminded and updated of the brand, and the online interaction between users helps raise brand awareness for new leads.

Accessibility

Accessibility is one of the factors why social media is one of the most effective means to raise brand awareness for brands. In light of literature, social media is easily accessible and takes minimum to no cost and knowledge to use. (Taprial & Kanwar 2012) Since everyone is on their mobile devices nowadays and most people are on at least on social media platform, such as Facebook, customers will come across with banner ads and sponsored posts that have been targeted to them about brands or products that they are interested in. The chances that customers click on these ads are generally high, which consequently results in increased brand awareness.

Credibility

Lastly, social media is a platform on which brands can build their credibility. Social media should be as transparent as possible in providing information establishing trust with the online communities. It is important for businesses to reach out to their target audience, listen to what they have to say in order to understand and deliver on their needs (Taprial & Kanwar 2012). According to the results of the interview, credibility encompasses being open, honest and transparent with customers. It also means delivering on the brand's vision, what the brand stands for and its values. Credibility means it is the brand's responsibility to reach out to the customer and listen to their needs and deliver what the customers expect of them. Credibility also means owning up to what you have done wrong. According to the results of the research, Usually, in the hotel industry, there are mishaps happening or customer giving a bad review because they had a bad experience. If this is true, it is their responsibility to take the blame and apologize. In the hotel industry, there are many cases where brands would hire people to write good reviews on TripAdvisor to comment nice things on posts about the brand's product, just to create false impressions for

online customers. As resp. 2 shared, having credibility means a brand would never have such “cheating” behavior.

5.1.3 The impact of social media on customer’s brand awareness

Positive impact of social media on brand awareness

Social media impacts brand awareness in many ways, positive and negative, as Palmer and Lewis (2009) contended that there is a conspicuous link between the use of social media platforms and the formation of brand awareness.

In terms of the positive impact of social media, first of all, according to the results of the research, social media helps to target specific customers and deliver targeted messages. Social media enables brands to connect to the younger audience and millennials as well as maintaining the relationships with the older customers. More and more younger people are becoming aware of the brand, since they are main population that uses and are most active on social media nowadays. Social media’s biggest advantage is that it allows specific targeting and helps brands connect with the right audience and customers; and customers find their desired products or services, without them having to do much research.

Secondly, social media helps to tell brand stories and connect with customers on a deeper, more personal level. Building brand awareness is the first step to establishing customer’s understanding of a product or service. (Watson 2013) At the early stage of building brand awareness, creating a thorough and profound comprehension for the customers of the product is paramount for future success. (Laiho 2012) From the findings of the interview and literature review, it is certain that a connection between social media and brand awareness is conspicuous. Brand awareness starts from the business and the brand having a deep and profound understanding of who they are, what their values and vision are, and what their brand story is. The second step is to the brand via social media to raise brand awareness. We are indeed living in the era of information technology and global digitalization. Social media is a bridge that connects brands and consumers, that helps brand to communicate and interact with customers. To new customers, social media helps with building brand image and helps with brand recognition, with things such as banner ads, reviews on online travel agencies. For old customers, social media helps with customer retention

and aids brand recall with activities such as mini games, discounts and promotions, posts of special events, etc.

According to the research findings, social media is effective when it comes to getting feedback from customers and use that data to innovate, adjust to meet their needs and expectations. It is also an effective tool to measure marketing success. You can see whether or not your brand has grown in numerical data and can track how many customers, likes, comments, shares you receive. With social media analytics, brands can see where the most likes come from, how traffic drives customers to their page, etc. Therefore, social media helps brands to track and monitor their brand awareness growth. Social media is not only a value tool when it comes to building customer relationships, but it can also be of great use when tracking revenue, reach and overall return on investment. (Sukhraj 2017) The four key performance indicators (KPIs) on social media that can help brands measure their success are engagement (likes, clicks, shares, comments, brand mentions and profile visits), reach (followers, impressions, traffic data), leads - which can be tracked through investigation of demographics of those actively interacting with the brand, and customers that the brand already has. By looking into the KPIs that are the most relevant to the brand's social media channels and audience's behavior, brands can gain valuable insights into how what they are doing right, and then use this data to better increase brand awareness for customers.

Negative impact of social media on brand awareness

According to the findings of the research, there are always downsides of using social media as a tool to raise brand awareness. Since the content on social media is user-generated. Anyone can post whatever they want. While this is good for people to find authentic comments, reviews and feedback, it also means anyone can fabricate things to post on social media. According to the findings of the research, social media is a double-edged knife. Especially when there is negative feedback, customers can be very exaggerated online on different channels, which can be harmful to the online reputation of the hotel. Brands do not have control over online social activities of online users. After all, in a social online setting, users are the ones who take various roles and have the upper hand and their influence on shaping public opinions through user-generated content. (Information Resources Management Association

2018 p. 676) This can pose a challenge that requires the marketing team to be agile and flexible when handling tricky situations, so that customers are satisfied, and negativity will not be spread. Second of all, social media is very erratic and unpredictable. One platform can be here today but it may not be the next. The constant movement and ever-changing nature of technology as well as evolution and emergence of different social media platforms means that there will be shifts in user usage from one channel to the next very quickly. Therefore, this means that brands have to be able to assess the risks of using social media platforms and be prepared to face unpredictable changes and new trends emerging on the Internet and know how to handle them.

5.2 Practical and managerial implications

In conclusion to the case study of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, the measures taken by said company on social media have been relatively, in conjunction with other forms of online marketing and traditional marketing. Social media has definitely helped the hotel generate more brand awareness among young as well as older audience and find new leads that later become customers. Overtime, Hanoi Daewoo Hotel has built a reputation for itself as one of the best hotels in Hanoi, therefore, its brand awareness is mostly enhanced through social media, for customer retention and maintaining a positive brand image in the customer's mind. The author has noticed that the hotel still has a bigger focus on other online marketing activities such as email marketing, public relations and traditional marketing, compared to social media. From the author's viewpoint, if Hanoi Daewoo Hotel could invest more and have a bigger budget for social media marketing, there would be a bigger impact on brand awareness and higher engagement rate from customers. For example, a suggestion of the author is that Hanoi Daewoo Hotel could do collaborations with celebrities and more sponsored posts on social media, even considering having a celebrity becoming a brand ambassador and have them present every social media channel. Since they are big influencers with huge followings, this could help the hotel gain mass brand exposure and awareness more quickly. Another suggestion is that the content on social media should be shifted more towards customer-focused than brand-focused. This way, it would be easier to capture the customer's attention when they scroll

through their social media feed, and makes the customers remember and recall the brand more easily in the long run, as they associate the brand with memories they have experienced in their lives.

5.3 Limitations of the research

One limitation of this research is arranging the interviews with the General Manager and the PR Manager of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. They both had a rather busy schedule. It was relatively tricky to get a hold of them and arrange an interview with each person. When the appointments had been made, there was only a short amount of time allowed for each interview. Therefore, the researcher might not have been able to uncover other layers of the topic. Other than that, there has not been any major limitation in the process of doing this research.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, brand awareness is crucial in the hotel industry as it is in any industry or business. Social media is one of the most significant phenomena of the 21st century that it is unavoidably one of the many marketing tools used by almost every famous brand or company worldwide. When combining social media in the hotel industry in building and raising brand awareness, there are sufficient results to be seen. However, from the findings of the research, the author noticed that there is not enough budget or investment made in social media marketing, at least for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel. There is still much more focus on other forms of online marketing and traditional marketing, which makes sense since the hotel industry places great emphasis on the human touch. However, more research is needed to explore new connections between social media and brand awareness. The findings of research like these can be used as useful information for brands and businesses to hopefully put more focus on social media and using it more effectively as a tool to enhance brand awareness. More surveys need to be conducted to test the efficiency of social media marketing measures on customer's awareness of a brand. More interviews should be conducted to receive more accurate results. More qualitative as well as quantitative research needs to be carried out in order to have the perspectives of both the business and the customers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

The questions asked and developed at the interviews:

1. How important is raising brand awareness for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (main question)
2. How important is the role of social media in raising brand awareness for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (main question)
3. What is the target customer group of Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (additional question)
4. What are the social media channels used for marketing activities? (main question)
5. What methods, tactics are used for different platforms? (main question)
6. What is the most active and effective platform? (additional question)
7. What are the effects of different marketing activities on brand awareness? (main question)
8. Can you share more about the types of content on social media of the hotel? (main question)
9. How do you think online communities contribute to building brand image and raising brand awareness? What kind of online communities do you want to create for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (clarifying question)
10. How important is (regular) interaction between brands and customers on social media and customers with each other in building brand awareness? (clarifying question)
11. Do you often create content on social media that has the potential of being shared by many people? Are there only brand-generated content or also user-generated content as well on social media? (clarifying question)

What is the importance of making and sharing quality content and its impact on brand image and brand awareness? (clarifying question)

12. How does social media increase accessibility for customers to Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (clarifying question)

13. The importance of establishing credibility for your brand on social media? What does credibility mean to Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? How doing that has helped build your brand and raise brand awareness? (clarifying question)

14. What are the opportunities and challenges of using these kinds of social media on raising brand awareness for Hanoi Daewoo Hotel? (additional question)